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TO THE
Theological School,
CAMBRIDGE,
BY
Rev. Dr. Francis.

METHOD

OF

CHRISTIAN SALVATION;

OR

WHAT IS THE APPROPRIATE WORK,

AND

WHAT SHOULD BE THE ESPECIAL AIM,

OF

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER?

Being three Dissertations received in answer to the offer of a premium in the Congregationalist and the Christian Register of the 4th and 5th of March, 1851, and two in answer to an offer on the 7th December, 1850.

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INTRODUCTION.

The three first Dissertations, published in this volume, were written in answer to an offer of a premium for "*The Dissertation containing the most full, perfect, and the best narration of historical and other facts, bearing upon the following questions, viz: So far as Christian Salvation is a change effected in individuals, and may be known to them, and be, by them, described to others, does the saving power of Christ eminently attend upon a knowledge of His life, as it is revealed in His manifestation, from His birth to His ascension? and, is it reasonable to expect that the redeeming effect of this saving power, will be proportioned to the faithfulness, with which His life is studied, and the perfectness with which it becomes known, and is contemplated?*" It is believed that they point to an extensive, and common field for effort, upon which Christians, of every name, will unite.

The premium was offered, as was stated in the proposal, and the Dissertations are now published, with reference to the eminently practical and important question, "WHAT IS THE APPROPRIATE WORK, AND WHAT SHOULD BE THE ESPECIAL AIM, OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER?"

The Dissertations are published without the names of their authors; for the publishers choose to rely upon their intrinsic merits to secure for them a favorable reception. They certainly do not agree with some of the theological views indicated and expressed, and would not be held responsible for them. But, if the perusal of these Dissertations shall prevent one

Clergyman, of any denomination, from adding strength to the prevailing scepticism, respecting the faith of the Clergy, by his treatment of the Bible, as though it was but a collection of topics, about which, sermons are to be delivered, which might as well have been written if that Book had no relation to Christianity, or, even if that Book itself had never been transmitted to us, then their publication will not be in vain. It will save some congregation from the torture of listening to the theories, the experience, or the moral wisdom, of the man who stands in their pulpit, when, upon hearing the text, they have a right to expect what assistance, he can give them, in attaining to a more perfect knowledge of the records of the Evangelists, the teachings of the Apostles,—the manifestation and the mind of Christ. "Why," says Herder to such preachers, "Why do you not rather descend at once from your pulpits, which are but clumsy chairs of instruction?" If morality was the main business of the preacher, then he thought, one might preach from Seneca and Epictetus, as well as from the Bible.

The manifestation of God, in Christ, communicated to men holier emotions, and sublimer spiritual truths, than were possible to them before His advent; and, thus, endowed language with a wealth of meaning, of which, before, it was incapable, and, to the worthy knowledge of which, no one can now attain, but by an intense study, a familiar knowledge, and a reverent contemplation, of these manifestations.

It is objected that the records of these manifestations,—of the life of Christ,—are but imperfect and fragmentary. But, those, who have concentrated their attention upon the phenomena and laws of animal life and development, have been enabled, from the view of a few imperfect scales of an extinct species of fish, or the fragment of a single bone of an unknown quadruped, to learn their size, form, structure, and habits of life. Why may we not expect, that a like concentration of attention upon the related facts, and upon the laws of spiritual action, and development, may enable us, with the guidance of those seemingly imperfect and fragmentary records, which, in accordance with the Divine purposes, have been transmitted to us, to attain unto a conscious knowledge of the life of Christ, in the completeness of its Divine proportions; thus satisfying the deepest want of every Christian's heart, and heralding, and hastening, the coming of the perfect kingdom of God in the hearts of all?

The publishers indulge the hope, that these Dissertations may *strengthen*, and make more practically efficient, the conviction, that, to a worthy knowledge of the significance of each single act and word of Jesus, all the recorded acts and words of His life must be present to the mind, and be deeply studied; that His life, when thus studied, is a revelation of higher, holier, and more saving truths, than, otherwise, it is possible for men to know; and, that the saving power of His life will be experienced, in its full energy, always, and only, by those, who, in a childlike faith, shall avail themselves of all the aids within their reach, and shall put forth their whole power, to attain to a perfect knowledge of Him.

We trust that some of the MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL may be quickened in their purpose of striving to present, to the minds and hearts of their people, so true a portraiture of Jesus, —to enable them to gain such a knowledge of Him, who is "The Way, The Truth, and The Life"—a knowledge, not of His words, and outward acts, alone, but also, of what these revealed to His disciples, and are adapted to convey to us, of His interior,—His intellectual and emotional, His Divine life,—as shall inspire that loving faith, which will be sure to lead them to strive for constantly increasing knowledge and clearer views of Him, as more to be desired, than all other attainments; until, by virtue of that law of our spiritual being, by which, we are surely assimilated to that which is excellent, in beings, having a like nature to ours, whom we reverence and love, they shall become one, in spirit, with Him, and one with God;—the *only* way, in which, by the laws of God, inwrought with the constitution of our nature, and according to His unchangeable purpose, declared in His word, the saving power of the Gospel can be experienced.

There are increasing numbers, among all denominations, who begin to be alive to the obvious truth, that to expect genuine, and really Christian fruits, previous to a knowledge of the Savior's life, is to look for effects, in the absence of their necessary and sufficient cause; and they are convinced, that all religious movements, and all projects for social and moral reforms, which are not originated by that divine energy of the Spirit of God in Christ, which inspires the records of His life, and with which the hearts of men are especially inspired through the study and knowledge of them, are essentially defective; and, that, without this energy, all instruction in formularies of doc-

trine and articles of faith, all moral precepts, however eloquently urged,—all dissuasions from vice, and all exhortations to virtue,—all hopes of Heaven, and all fears of retribution,—must ever prove as ineffectual and vain, as did the speculations and instructions of all heathen philosophers and moralists, and all the precepts, persuasions, promises and threatenings, of the Jewish law,—which, while they presented truths to the intellect, exhorted to virtue, and commanded righteousness and holiness, utterly failed to impart, to the hearts of men, any sufficient spiritual and saving *power*.

It is confidently believed, that a purer and more profound Christology, will cause the Clergy to rely less and less upon their efforts to promote the spiritual well-being of men, by directly effecting changes in their external relations, condition, or, even their outward moral conduct;—that they will cease to expect to free the spirits of men from their bondage to sin, by striking the chains from their limbs, or to advance the purposes of the mission of Christ, by means of any outward organization, or any forms of earthly government or dominion, acting upon men from without;—kinds of dominion, which, in the most perfect and beneficent forms, in which, after the forty days of fasting in the wilderness, they could be presented, in vision, or suggested, to the mind of Jesus, were rejected and cast behind Him, as the suggestion of the Spirit of all evil.

The signs of the times seem most surely to indicate the early dawning of that brighter day, when, instead of directing thirsting men to cisterns built of earthly materials and erected by human skill, which can furnish no sure or full supply, and which must, in time, entirely fail,—the ministers of Christ, who stand in every house of God, shall, at all times, with their whole heart, put forth their whole power, to lead all men to that divine and ever living fountain, in Him, which gushes forth, for the ever seeking spirit, an ever refreshing and always abundant supply.

The fourth and fifth Dissertations are two of the ten received in answer to the offer of a premium on the 7th of December, 1850. Of the remaining eight, several may be published in another volume. The offer was made, in the hope, that it might be demonstrated, that there was no portion of the Evangelical Narratives, to which the thoughts, acts, and words, of Jesus of Nazareth, gave origin, which was not inexhaustibly rich in materials for reflection and discourse.

DISSERTATION.

To commend to the attention of those engaged in the Christian ministry or preparing for its labors, the study and the preaching of the Life of JESUS, is the design of these pages. It is the belief of the writer that here is to be found the most effectual means for elevating and purifying the character of the individual, and for communicating to the instructions of the Pulpit that force and tenderness which are necessary to render them effectual for the conversion of mankind. Not that theology should be narrowed down to a single department, however important that may be; not that the student should cease to investigate, or the herald of the cross to declare "the whole counsel of God." We would but contribute this humble effort to raise to more just estimation than it has yet received, that great theme of reflection and of discourse, which is peculiarly Christian,—the revelation which our Heavenly Father gave of his own perfections, and of our duty, in the life of his Son.

The proposition to the proof and illustration of which our labor will be directed, is the following, expressed nearly in the words used by the proposer of the subject:—

"So far as Christian salvation is a change effected in individuals, and may be known to them, and be by them described to others, the saving power of Christ does eminently attend upon a knowledge of his life, as it is revealed in his manifestation from his birth to his ascension; and it is reasonable to expect that the redeeming effect of this saving power will be

proportioned to the faithfulness with which his life is studied, and the perfectness with which it becomes known and is contemplated."

The terms of this proposition render it unnecessary, as it would be obviously inexpedient, to embarrass our argument by connecting with it the discussion of any controverted doctrine. Nor will the candid disciple of any denomination deny that salvation does to a great extent include "a change effected in individuals," which "may be known to them, and be by them described to others;" a change of heart and life, a change of feelings, purposes and conduct. It was early declared respecting Jesus, that he should "save his people from their sins." In this prophetic announcement, we are aware, a pious Jew of that generation would consider temporal deliverance strongly implied. Men spoke not then, as many do among us, of the calamities of a nation, as if calamity could come without crime. They spoke of national sins, and sometimes included under that name the punishment also. But if temporal rescue was understood as promised in this prediction, the idea of moral renovation was not lost sight of. And when our Redeemer, by his instructions, and by the great events of his life and his death, had manifested the spiritual nature of his religion, then did there shine forth a wider and a holier meaning, hitherto concealed, in the words "He shall save his people from their sins." His people were not only Israel, but mankind; nor was his salvation to be a mere bringing back of the mass to the comparative purity of their nation's earlier days, so that with purity, independence and glory might return. No. It was the establishment of a holier law than Moses ever knew,—the rescue of all who would accept that rescue from every form of sin,—and the acquirement thereby, not of earthly conquest for a nation, but of a place at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven for every faithful follower of the Messiah.

We are not to be rescued from suffering alone. Our God

did not condescend to reveal himself to mankind by miracle, changing the course of nature,—he did not send the holiest of his messengers, the Being honored with the name of his Son, to die a death of agony, merely for the removal of an outward penalty. To save from this was a part of his holy purpose, but not all. It was not the most important part. Sin is a greater evil than punishment. To save from sin then is a more important object than to save from punishment. It is so moreover, because to a great extent, it includes the other. To reform the guilty does not in itself indeed absolve him from the penalty due to his past sins; but it saves him from the suffering which must have ensued from his continuance in guilt for the future. Far better than forgiving sin, is it to prevent the necessity of forgiveness.

Nor is it possible to obtain divine pardon for the offences we have already committed, without turning from them for the future. Whatever view we take of the condition of forgiveness, repentance must be regarded as essential. We must be saved from our sins themselves, before eternal justice can pardon their past commission. Our forsaking them does not of itself entitle us to pardon, but surely we cannot hope to be forgiven, unless we forsake them.

To procure our pardon for the past alone, leaving us still subject to those evil passions which would quickly plunge us in new guilt, would therefore be to meet but a small portion of our need, while it would yet be more than Divine justice could allow. To procure by anticipation a pardon to the impenitent for their future sins, would be to dethrone God's justice, and withdrawing from us the restraint of fear, to leave us an unprotected prey to the worst of evils, that of sin itself. We cannot be saved unless we abandon sin.

This abandonment of sin includes a change of conduct, and as the cause of this, a change of heart, or of spiritual disposition, feelings and purposes. In this change the general consent

of Christians recognizes the influence of the Holy Spirit. But that influence, it is also generally admitted, accompanies and aids the use of the appropriate means. Were it otherwise, it would be miraculous, and would supercede all human effort.—The Spirit does not win to Christ the souls of those to whom the Gospel has not been preached; but it accompanies the preaching of the word, and renders the people willing in the day of God's power. While then we fully admit the agency of the Spirit to change the heart of the sinner, we are obliged, generally, to act as if his rescue depended on our own efforts alone. Thus at present, we examine what views it is most expedient to present in order to gain the hearts of men to the truth and to the love of Christ, knowing that though the sovereign power of God could work by any means or without any, it is his will to work most effectually by such as are by us most judiciously chosen, and most faithfully employed.

There are various motives presented to us in the Scriptures, by which, with the Divine blessing upon them, the erring may be influenced to the abandonment of their sins. The instructions and the warnings of God's ancient law, the precepts of the Apostles, and still more those of Jesus himself, may and must be urged. The fear of Divine displeasure and of its awful consequences may warn, and the love of our Heavenly Benefactor may encourage,—

> "The violated Law speaks forth
> Its thunders, and in strains as soft
> As Angels use, the Gospel whispers peace."

Among all these means of salvation we claim a place of eminence for the contemplation of our Redeemer's life. If the sinner can be brought to direct his gaze to this, he perceives the strong contrast between his own fallen state and the beauty of a perfect character. Often, in witnessing the wrong conduct of men, the thoughtful mind is impressed with the idea that they know not the real character of their own actions; they know not what they are doing. You hear the voice of

continual strife in a family circle, and yet the members of that circle appear all unconscious how painful is the spectacle which they exhibit. You behold a man enriching himself by a hundred petty and ignoble tricks, and yet he thinks himself an honorable man. We are blind to the moral character of our own actions. Now there is nothing which removes that blindness more readily, than to have a higher example presented in strong contrast to our own practice. Let a member of that wrangling family circle go into one which exhibits the constant influence of domestic love, and his eyes are opened to the unloveliness of his own. Let that fraudulent dealer be brought into intimate contact with men of real honor, and as he perceives how different is their conduct from what his own has been, he feels a shame that he had never felt before. Thus it is that the great example, the life of Christ, by showing us the beauty of holiness, manifests the evil of sin. In proportion then, as that life is studied, it is likely to exert a saving influence over us. It requires to be studied, for though some of its lessons are so plain that he who runs may read, yet there are blended in it such peculiarities, resulting from the customs of the age, the individual circumstances and especially the high office of our Lord, that it is necessary to allow for all these in our consideration, in order that we may have the intrinsic beauty of our Savior's character, in a clear and imitable form before us. We are to resemble Christ, not in going round from place to place,—not in instructing crowds, not even in spending nights in prayer,—but in meekness, firmness, faith and love,—in seeking the good of others rather than our own, subjecting our own will to the will of our Maker, using worldly power or wealth if we possess it, as he used his unearthly endowments, not for the gratification of vanity or pride, but for purposes of usefulness or of piety,—bearing opposition with meekness, and wrong with forgiveness, sorrow with submission, and death with trustful resignation. If thus his example enables us to act, *&c*

will save us from sin here, and, at least so far, from the consequences which must follow sin, both here and hereafter.

Nor in speaking of the saving influence of the contemplation of our Redeemer's life, must it be forgotten, that the events accompanying his death are included in this expression. They possess indeed a power over the heart, peculiar to themselves. Our Lord said, referring we are told, to the nature of the death he was to undergo, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The observation, had it come from uninspired lips, would still have been recognized as deeply sagacious. It is death that wins for the truly great more followers and friends than life. It disarms enmity, it softens jealousy, it hallows and renders permanent the attachment of admirers. Howard, on his death-bed, desired a private funeral, no memorial but a sun-dial over his grave, and to be forgotten; nor probably did it then seem but that his modest wish might be realized. But when his loving spirit had left its clay, though he died in a foreign land, the province where he breathed his last poured out its thousands to mourn him, his features were copied in enduring marble, and his name became the watchword of philanthropy throughout the world. How then must it be with him from whose Gospel Howard had learned his lesson of benevolence,—of whose glory his was but a reflected ray? And in the death of Jesus, far more than in that of any among his followers, every circumstance combined which could affect the heart. The eminence and the innocence of the sufferer, the faithless betrayal, the sad denial, the unjust sentence, the torturing crucifixion,—and shining through them all, patience, dignity, forgiving meekness, and all-prevailing love. Eighteen hundred years have rolled away since then; but it is not possible,—we firmly believe it is not possible, for infidel or atheist or criminal, to read the account of the death of Jesus, and remain unmoved. The testimony of that "self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau," has been repeated many

times, and a noble tribute it was, to burst from unbelieving lips: "Socrates died like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ like a God."

Can it be otherwise then, than that the contemplation of our Lord's life and death should be a most important means for the improvement of our own characters, and for enabling those who would exercise a useful influence over others, to win them to the love of their Savior and of their God? If we contemplate Christ, we cannot but love him; if we love him, we shall desire to resemble him, and in this resemblance is salvation.

Likeness to Christ is repeatedly urged in the Scriptures, as that which the disciple should strive to attain. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," said our Savior himself. Commanding his disciples to love one another, he added, "as I have loved you." Teaching them humility, he subjoined the words, "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Thus too, his Apostles have taught us, "Christ also suffered for us," said Peter, "leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." "Let the same mind be in you," said Paul "which was in Christ Jesus." "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

These passages, and similar ones which might be added to their number, supply a test, by which men may ascertain the firmness of their Christian standing. It is a test very different from those by which men have often judged themselves and others. We may readily conceive the astonishment of many who have stood high in the world's estimation as Christians, on finding such a standard of measurement applied to them, and still more at the result of the trial. The self-tormenting devotee, with his hair-cloth shirt and bloody scourge, or he of ancient times who withered on the summit of a pillar that he might gain the glory of saintship, would start with incredulous if not disdainful surprise, if told that with all his voluntary misery, he could have no part in Christ, unless possessed of the

spirit of one who did nothing for ostentation, and whose service of God was rendered in love, not in fear. With equal amazement the conqueror, who had compelled pagans to receive baptism at the sword's point, and the crusader whose war-cry had swelled above the routed followers of Mohammed, would learn that they must be judged by the conformity of their characters to his who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers;" "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." The inquisitor who had sent hundreds to the flames for their belief, and thought himself to be thereby doing service to God and man, would find that like those of old who desired to call down fire from heaven, he had "known not what manner of spirit he was of." Even the learned scholar, versed in all the intricacies of theology, to whom sacred places and scriptural customs are familiar as his own home, correct in judgment on all doctrinal points, and equally ready and willing to defend the truth against every assailant, might find, if he had looked on his own attainments with pride, that with all his learning and his zeal, he fell short of the spirit of him, who was "meek and lowly in heart." Even thus did St. Paul declare, that though one had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries and all knowledge, and though he had all faith, so that he could remove mountains, and had not charity, he was nothing. One indispensable requisite then there is,—the spirit of Christ; that spirit of which the lovely grace of charity is a distinguishing trait. But that grace, beautiful as it is, is not alone in the formation of the Christ-like character. There must be energy as well as gentleness; there must be devotion to God as well as love to man.

How shall that spirit be described? Nay, wherefore describe it, since the living exhibition is far better than the dead description? That spirit which we must possess, or we cannot be sharers in the salvation of the Gospel, is the *spirit of Christ*. To the character of Christ then we must look, the life of

Christ must be the theme of our study, if we would comprehend and adopt into our own hearts and lives the spirit which animated him.

But if this be so, why is it, that with this sacred model full in view, the nominal disciples of Jesus have so far come short of the character he enforced and in himself exemplified? Why is it that if we look at the surface of society alone, there meet us so many sad proofs of continued human imperfection, so many strifes and frauds in public and private life, that we are at times almost led to pronounce Christianity a failure? Rash indeed would that judgment be; for the Gospel has triumphed unseen by the superficial observer. Its efficacy is witnessed, if not in the conduct of nations or their rulers, yet often in the walks of private, nay of humble life; and as of old when Elijah mournfully declared that he was left alone in Israel a prophet of the Lord, he was reminded that there were seven thousand as faithful as himself, so he who mourns for the supposed failure of the Gospel to regenerate mankind, may take at once rebuke and encouragement at the thought, that in the retirement of unnumbered homes there are, though the world can trace them but imperfectly, thousands of faithful hearts in which the spirit of Christ is continually and brightly manifested.

But why is not the number greater still? "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men."—There is none, through the civilized world that has not heard that Jesus lived, and died, and rose again, to bring men near to God. Wherefore then is it that his spirit has not more obviously ruled in the lands that are called by his name? Why has not that spirit dwelt more frequently with kings on their thrones? Why, alas! has it not always been manifest even with the anointed servants of Christ in the temples consecrated to his name?

Let us take, to find an answer to this question, a rapid glance at the instruction which history affords. We may perhaps

discover without much difficulty, what have been the great practical mistakes of the world with regard to Christianity.

The first period we contemplate is that of the primitive church, a period extending from the time of our Savior for about three hundred years, and terminating with the establishment of Christianity as the ascendant religion of the Roman Empire. This was a period of persecution, not continual indeed, but sufficiently frequent to secure for the most part, purity, sincerity and zeal among those who dared to profess the tenets of the persecuted system. Whose was the spirit in which the early martyrs met their sufferings, whose the example which animated them to endurance, may be learned from the dying words of the first of their number. The prayer of Stephen, "Lord lay not this sin to their charge," was copied from the divine original of the cross; and his words "Lord Jesus receive my spirit," while bearing the same resemblance to the Savior's last utterance, point us directly to him whose character was reflected in that of his disciple.

This period, though marked by so much of suffering, is justly regarded as the golden age of the church. With the memory of Apostles and their companions still recent, with greater unanimity of doctrine than subsequently existed, in the early glow of its enthusiasm for the blessed gift that God had bestowed on man, the Christian community beheld during that age, its cause advance, not only despite the malice of its enemies, but through that very malice. From the days of Herod to those of Constantine, not a christian lived but knew that he might be called to seal his belief with his blood; and few were there, through all that long period, but could recall the memory of some heroic martyrdom, which, either witnessed by themselves, or vividly reported to them by eye-witnesses, had contributed to give depth and seriousness to their religious principles. More than all perhaps, the example of the Saviour himself was recent, and was universally known. The litera-

ture of Christendom consisted of but few books, and among them the four Gospels not only held the chief place, but were most widely diffused. No spiritual tyranny had yet forbidden to the people the reading of the Scriptures. No cumbrous systems of divinity had obscured the plain facts of the life of Jesus Christ. The result was that then, in a greater degree probably than ever since, his character was understood, and his spirit prevalent among his disciples. Had that early purity continued unabated, the whole world had long since owned the sceptre of Jesus, and that not in name only, but in the spirit and the power of holiness.

But while the trials of adversity strengthen, those of prosperity enfeeble. At the expiration of the period just described, or about three hundred years after Christ, his religion attained the triumph toward which it had been gradually advancing. Constantine, the monarch whose dominions were co-extensive with civilization, declared himself the friend of Christianity; and of his successors, one alone, during a short reign, endeavored to re-establish the ancient paganism. The teachers of the faith, instead of being driven to take refuge in deserts, appeared as honored guests and counsellors in royal courts. The simple "upper chamber" where the apostles had met, and the caves of the earth where their early followers had gathered, gave place to splendid temples, either purged from the old idolatry, or newly erected by the zeal of Christian princes. Alas that peace and plenty should so soon have manifested their power to lead astray! No sooner was the church at rest without, than it was rent by divisions within. In one part of the empire there raged a controversy respecting the claims of two rival candidates for a bishoprick; in another, a far wider division appeared, respecting the nature of the Savior. Men forgot that test of discipleship which Jesus gave, when he declared that whosoever should do the will of his Father in heaven, was his brother, and sister, and mother. They forgot too that other test in the words of

St. Paul, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Attention was drawn away from the study of our Lord's character to doctrines respecting his person; the spirit of Christ was forgotten, in the very attempt to do honor to his name. Sovereigns, who desired to show reverence for the religion they had adopted, increased the rising evils by bringing the power of the state to the settlement of doctrinal disputes. Thus persecution came in, and Arian or Athanasian, as the case might be, was deprived of office, banished or imprisoned. The evils and scandals which thus arose, are traceable to two causes,—the alliance of Christianity with the temporal power, and the elevation of doctrine above duty,—of speculations with regard to abstruse points above the study of the Redeemer's character and spirit.

Two centuries,—the fourth and fifth,—thus passed. They were marked by the labors of many noble minds, and undoubtedly rich in the fruits of holiness in innumerable hearts and lives; but harrassed by continual controversy among sects so numerous, and divided upon subjects so remote from practical religion, that they present to the modern investigator a maze as unprofitable as it is intricate. But then came, in the third period of Christian history, a darker day. The Christian world was overrun by barbarians, the old government and the old language perished, civilization went back, and of all precious things that had been, religion alone remained. For a thousand years, from the close of the fifth to that of the fifteenth century, was modern Europe in progress of formation from the ruins of the old. The tendency already spoken of continued, to exalt doctrine above practice; and, far worse for mental freedom than the old union of church and state, the church became an empire by itself, and lorded it over the state, while kings knelt as slaves before the throne of one who styled himself the successor of St. Peter. The tendency to forget the simple standards of Christian acceptableness, was enhanced by

the prevailing ignorance. How could men know what was the spirit of Christ, when few could read, and even to these few the record of the Saviour's life was a book either carefully prohibited, or at best but little known? We cannot wonder then, if during that long period, the spirit of the Redeemer made but little progress in the hearts of men.

And yet these were by no means irreligious ages. The barbarians who received Christianity, welcomed it with the warm love of manly and unaffected hearts; and in their conversion it appeared how great was the attractiveness of the character of Christ. When Eligius preached upon the Crucifixion before Clovis, the barbarian king started from his throne and exclaimed, "Had I been there with my brave Franks, this should not have been done." The exclamation showed that the Gospel was gaining an ascendancy over that rude heart; and it showed also how much must be done before one like Clovis could enter fully into the Saviour's spirit. We probably fail to appreciate how great the influence of the Gospel really was upon the barbarians. We perceive that in some respects they were barbarians still; but we see not what they would have been, if Christian influences had failed to reach them.

It is well known to the student of history that the darkest age of Europe was not that which immediately succeeded the invasions of these northern tribes. Some centuries elapsed before ancient civilization could entirely pass away. The cause of the decline was not that the new races were unimprovable; nor absolutely that they did not appreciate learning in others; but that, preferring the rougher life of war and of the chase, they left to the conquered the employments of peace. And the conquered, the descendants of those who had been subjects of Rome, failing to receive the encouragement for learning which a well organized community would have afforded, were in part tillers of the soil, and in part betook themselves to monasteries, where, under the unhappy restraint of celibacy, they raised up

no successors to receive from them the light of intelligence. Gradually learning died away. The tenth century was the period of midnight darkness; thence there was a slow but certain progress towards the dawn.

In that darkness the example of Jesus was scarcely more available to his disciples, than if his name had been unknown to them; for with little more than his name were they familiar. That this ignorance respecting the character which should have been their model was the great error of that period, is most apparent when we observe the conduct of those who were then most worthy of admiration. Never probably has the world produced an uninspired man more true to the light he enjoyed, than Louis IX. of France, to whom, singularly enough, the honors of saintship were awarded, not so much for the virtues which he really possessed, as for the error into which he fell. What led the excellent king into that error, his participation in the Crusades? Could he have thus mistaken "what spirit he was of," had he been familiar with the life of that Saviour, "whom, having not seen, he loved"? We are told that when the plague raged in his camp, this Christian prince bore to the burial on his own shoulders the corpse of one who had died of that dreadful malady, and which no one else would touch. If the glimpses he had gained of the Saviour's self-devotion taught him heroism like this, how much nobler yet might his character have been, had the whole bright example of Jesus been open to his view!

About the close of the period upon which we are now engaged, appeared the celebrated treatise "On the Imitation of Christ," which bears the name of Thomas a Kempis. Excellent as is this work, its contents, compared with its name, indicate how far the wisest and best were at that time from the true practical contemplation of the Saviour's human character. Christ, as presented by this venerable author, is rather the glorified than the suffering Redeemer; and though in detached

passages the example of his meek endurance is held up to view, there is not that full analysis of the glorious model, which would have placed all its attributes before us in their due proportion.

Little, we have seen, could be expected, from the influence of our Lord's example, during the ages of darkness. But with the Reformation, which marks the commencement of the fourth period, we might hope to witness a decided change. And a change indeed there was. Luther and his fellow-laborers brought forth the holy book from the prison of papal prohibition, and the prison too of foreign and dead languages, and caused it to speak, as the Apostles spoke on the day of Pentecost, "to every man in his own tongue, wherein he was born." And not in vain it was that thus the recorded life of Jesus was made to shed its light upon the minds of those who owned him as their master;—not altogether in vain, for purity of morals and fervency of piety revived and prevailed in the reformed states of Europe far beyond the standard of the ages preceding; while even in the countries which remained attached to the Romish Church, there was a strong reaction, an improvement scarce less marked than that which appeared among Protestants. Yet all was not gained which might have been expected; and of what seemed to be won, much was soon lost. Protestants became divided among themselves, and persecuted each other, sometimes even to the death; and when this tendency gave way, it yielded not to true Gospel charity, but to indifference. The Protestantism of England in the reign of Charles II., alternately ferocious and dissolute, might be compared to the corruption of Rome itself, before Luther arose. And even when this period had passed by, Protestantism, at least in England, seemed in a great degree a failure. It had rescued certain countries from the Church at Rome; but with this it appeared contented, and aimed neither to win fresh victories for the truth, nor to establish deeply in knowledge and piety, the minds over which it had acquired an ascendancy.

Of this comparative failure of Protestant Christianity, two reasons may be assigned; and they are fully sufficient to account for it. One is, that the Reformers retained the old error of uniting Church and State. Thus the Christian pastor was in danger of degenerating into a mere official functionary, paid for going through a certain round of formal duties; and this danger was in England greatly increased by the fact, that there was no responsibility on the part of pastors to the people of their charge. The other cause lay in the controversial position in which the Reformers necessarily found themselves. How could men study the life of Jesus, and learn his meek spirit, when they were building the walls of their Zion, like the Jews of old, with the tool of labor in one hand, and the weapon of defence in the other? Doctrine was naturally the object of attention in those days of contest. More excusably than often before, the old error still existed, of preferring doctrine to practical faith. Then too, with the whole Bible before them, and but lately restored to their possession, men could not at once discriminate the comparative value of its different portions. Many of the reformers seem to have been more captivated by the stern spirit of Moses than by the gentle one of Christ. The Old Testament became elevated to an equality with the New; and the plain meaning of the Saviour's precepts was often strained, in order to appear consistent with deeds which had been committed in the comparative darkness of a much earlier age. Still we find this tendency to continue. Those who desire to defend the peculiarities of an imperfect form of society, which are gradually passing away, fail not to find in the Old Testament that sanction which they might seek in vain in the pages of the New.

Somewhat before the middle of the last century, appeared the early dawn of a brighter day. Its most remarkable indication was the rise of Methodism, through the efforts of Whitefield and Wesley. The spirit which appeared in them soon

spread beyond the limits of the sect they founded. Howard, and after him Wilberforce and others, gave to the reawakening religion of the age a direction towards practical philanthropy; and the example of him who "went about doing good" became more and more recognized as the true pattern and test of Christian character.

That brighter day still shines. More and more has the theology of mere doctrine declined from the controlling influence it has too long held. Missionary and philanthropic efforts, carried forward on the most extensive scale, bear witness that the Church is in earnest in the performance of her duty, now recognised, of glorifying God by doing good to man. The character of the Saviour, the great lesson of the New Testament, is more studied, and we trust, better understood; and the same spirit which was in him, is animating more and more widely the hearts of his faithful people.

One further illustration, drawn from recent history, may be added ere we close, to show to how great a degree the power of Christianity resides in the life of its founder. Not many years have passed since bright hopes were formed for India, from the reported conversion of the learned and virtuous Bramin, Rammohun Roy. This illustrious man, judging from extensive knowledge of his countrymen, conceived that the Gospel would best win their regard, if presented in the guise of abstract truth, without what would in his opinion be the encumbrance of a narrative, which might excite incredulity through its miraculous character. He published therefore, for the use of his countrymen, a volume of the Saviour's teachings alone, to which he gave the name, "The precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness." With the same views he established a place of worship. But the experiment proved an utter failure. The instructions of the Saviour, beautiful and holy as they are, need the living commentary of his example. It is by the life

and the death of Jesus, in connection with the lessons that he gave, that the world must be converted to his truth.

If the course of thought which has thus been pursued, and illustrated by the history of the Christian Church, be correct, it will be perceived that what the world most needs, is that the example of the Saviour be placed in living beauty before it. Then will come the fuller triumph of the Gospel than earth has yet witnessed, when the character of Jesus shall be the theme of every disciple's meditation, and the spirit of Jesus shall breathe through each disciple's soul. Then shall the strongholds of heathenism fall; then shall time-worn error vanish, and bigotry give way, not beneath the blows of argument, but before the resistless might of holiness and love. Then shall this earth, redeemed by the spirit of Christ, offer to the benignant eye of its Creator, the bright counterpart of his own celestial realms.

SECOND DISSERTATION.

"So far as Christian salvation is a change effected in individuals and may be known to them and be by them described to others, does the saving power of Christ eminently attend upon a Knowledge of His life as it is revealed in His manifestation from His birth to His ascension, and is it reasonable to expect that the redeeming effect of His saving power will be proportioned to the faithfulness with which His life is studied, and the perfectness with which it becomes known and is contemplated"?

I am expected to give a *narration of historical* and *other facts* bearing upon the above questions. If by the phrase "saving power of Christ" is meant to be implied the "*change of heart*" commonly spoken of as a "conversion" or "regeneration" the facts of Christian experience would not justify me in affirming that such a "change of heart" has been necessarily or even generally preceded by a Knowledge of Christ's life, since in most if not all the cases with which I am acquainted this "change" has been effected by the agency of the Holy Spirit operating directly, or else indirectly through some outward event or circumstance, leading to repentance and prayer. But if the "saving power of Christ" means "sanctification," I feel no hesitation in answering the question in the affirmative.

That a faithful study of Christ's manifestation from his birth to his ascension is necessary to sanctification, follows in the

first place, from the nature of Christianity itself. There are many elements in it which are in a measure common to both Judaism and philosophic Paganism. Yet we shall search in vain among the records of Judaism or Paganism, for an example of a sanctified character in the Christian sense of the phrase. The least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than Socrates or John the Baptist. Sanctification then must flow mainly from elements peculiar to Christianity. These are Love to God and Love to man, Humility, a special Providence, and Immortality.

Now these elements are so inextricably interwoven with the personality of Christ, that it is impossible in contemplation to separate them. The abstract ethical principles of Christianity cannot be thoroughly appreciated apart from the external circumstances with which they stand associated in the Gospel records. The outward events and circumstances are necesary to explain the ethical principles, and these latter dignify and perpetuate the outward events. It is not until we can picture the Saviour in the striking scenes of his life that we can appreciate his instructions. There is a dramatic element pervading the gospels. And this suggests an illustration of the views just presented. How flat and comparatively void of meaning would the famous soliloquy of Hamlet appear, if not viewed in connection with his actual situation and the circumstances that called it forth !

There is a notable difference between Christianity and Mahometanism or other false religions, in this respect that its most affecting truths are not presented in an abstract form, but always in connection with familiar situations, or at least such as are easily conceived, in which the blessed Saviour was the most prominent object. In order to understand the Koran or the Vedas a knowledge of the lives of their respective authors is by no means necessary, but the truths of Christianity are contained in the facts of Christ's life just as the philosophy of history is con-

tained in the events that have successively taken place in the world.

To say that the saving power of Christ consists in a subjective realization of his manifestation, is only affirming that Christianity like every form of true philosophy is built up in the mind by a regular (though perhaps in this case an insensible) induction from *facts*.

Again, Christianity is permanently a religion of authority.—As such it must bear the seals of such an authority, namely an outward revelation from God in the words of its author; otherwise the only appeal is to consciousness, a tribunal upon whose decision some in these modern times have been inclined to rest the claims of Christianity, as an authoritative system of faith and practice. I shrewdly suspect, however, that like the Pagan philosophers of the first and second century, they do not ascribe due influence to the insensible operation upon their consciousness of the objective circumstances of Christianity.

Again the truths of Christianity, although confirmed by the highest reason and themselves constituting and involving the highest philosophy, yet have their seat in the affections, whether derived from the knowledge of Christ's life or the writings of the Apostles, all will agree that they are peculiarly fitted to arouse the emotions, and furthermore that there can be no true piety where there is no fervor, where the *heart* is not touched. But by the constitution of our minds, this effect depends on the vividness of the conception which the mind entertains of the scenes and incidents recorded in the gospels. By musing on them in our hearts the fire burns. They seem present before us; we realize them, and to some extent experience the emotions of those who witnessed them. And this effect is possible to all, for while it is true, that if Christianity were a faith which in the form of abstract propositions appealed mainly to the logical faculties, the power of metaphysical abstraction would be the best qualification for understanding it, coming to us *as it*

does through the life of Him who " went about doing good," it appeals directly to that capacity for strong emotion which the ignorant possess in common with the learned, thereby vindicating the declaration of its author that it should be preached to *all* in every land.

I am inclined to lay much stress upon this fact of the suitableness of the objective circumstances of the gospels to touch the heart of humanity, because on the recognition of this fact depends the prosperity or utility of preaching to the masses at all, for, as will appear in the sequel, no preaching which ignores the life of Christ can in general exert any vital, lasting power.

I proceed then in my enumeration of facts to remark further that the saving power of Christ must consist in the knowledge of his life, from a consideration of the constitution of the mind upon which this power is to be exerted. Thus, we say that Biography is the most useful of studies, reproducing the excellence it describes. What books have had the widest circulation? In St. Augustine's time it was his Confessions. What book has done more than all the books that were ever written to secure for the Calvinistic theology a lodgment in the hearts of the people? Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress! Now there is no reason why the life of Christ should not exert a like superior practical influence as compared with the theological and ethical principles of his religion by themselves considered. It *must* be so. It may produce a thrill of pleasure to learn in so many words that the Almighty cherishes a love for his creatures, but it melts us to tears to think of Jesus raising the widow's son from the dead. The Christian pastor cannot hesitate long in choosing what shall be the general strain of his preaching, whether he shall dwell most upon the dogmata of his faith, or their perfect illustration in the life of Christ, for he knows how much the efficacy of his preaching depends on his setting the example.— It is interesting and pertinent to this subject to trace the relation of *example* and *precept*, abstract Christianity and practical

piety. There is in the mind a deep laid skepticism with respect to all truths which cannot be realized in the imagination or to the senses. The little child interrupts you in the midst of your story to ask you if it is "sure enough." The mind must be bolstered up by the power of conviction. Hence the power of Christ's life as a credible fact to enforce the truths of his gospel.

We may best learn in what element consists the saving power of Christ by observing what it is in ourselves that we accept as the test of spiritual life in the soul. We see that it is the life, the objective application of Christian truths, the fruits of faith. It is this in us which the religious instincts of our fellow men stamp with the seal of their approbation as being genuine Christianity. Does it not follow then that the life of Christ, presenting the loftiest application of his truth to life, must exert a saving power upon the hearts and consciences of men far more efficacious than could be expected to flow from his doctrines by themselves considered?

The connection of the name and person of Jesus with the notion of moral obligation and the performance of moral duties, at once elevates our actions above the sphere of morals into that of religion. For the essence of religion is morality actuated by the love or fear of Christ, that is, of God.

One fact is worth a thousand speculations. We continually see cause to distrust human reason. The soul yearns for the objective in religion, for some anchor sure and steadfast. Our highest independent reasonings from a scripture foundation, erected into systems of faith and practice, must have more or less of the character of fallibility which attaches to human reason. But Jesus offers himself not only as a perfect pattern of holiness, but speaks "*as one having authority.*"

As another argument, while on this part of the subject, for holding up the life of Christ, let us ponder with reverence upon those passages recorded by the Evangelists in which our Saviour speaks of the silent and insensible growth of the Kingdom of

God in the soul. Now we cannot preach abstractions without too exclusively exercising in ourselves and others, the intellect, the perceptive faculties which oblige us to discern and mark every step of our spiritual progress with logical precision. It is only by imbibing the spiritual influences that exhale as it were from the manifestation of Christ that the Kingdom of God cometh upon us "not with observation," but like the wind that "bloweth where it listeth." The true spiritual life is not a matter of doctrine, or inculcation, or deduction, but of exhibition and unconscious imitation.

Again we see in the general results of Christianity, especially in forming the characters of the Apostles, other reasons for believing that its saving power consists in the knowledge of Christ's life. When I consider the great changes that in the short space of three years of unceasing bodily activity were wrought in the dispositions and characters of the Apostles, I know of no influence adequate to this result, except the daily experience of our Saviour's character.

If the saving power of Christ was not designed by him to flow from his manifestation from his birth to his ascension, his followers would not have confined themselves so closely to the narration of it. They were not so ignorant as to be incapable of abstract reflection. Luke was a man of education and John wrote in an age when the spirit of philosophizing was rife.

If it was merely the abstract reason of the Christian revelation which was to exert this saving power (just as now-a-days any great leader of thought exerts power) how shall we account for the fact that the Apostles without books could preserve, after the lapse of so many years, so much freshness in speaking of truths which they had early imbibed in the company of Jesus? Mere intellectual knoweldge, that which is learned (like the mathematics) unless it be continually refreshed, will soon slip from the memory. The Apostles were not the men to preserve purely abstract impressions longer than other men, while

on the other hand the cast of their minds peculiarly fitted them to retain those moral impressions which they received in their personal intercourse with Jesus, and which were associated with endearing personal reminiscences.

Viewing the world at large; to what shall we attribute the growth of elemosynary institutions and the general humanizing of intercourse since the time of Christ, if not to the saving power of his life? Nothing but the experience of such a character as that of Christ, seems able to subdue selfishness and cause men to love God with all their hearts and their neighbor as themselves. Without this element of power in the life of Christ, abstractions would be of little avail to persuade men to do those things which concern even their own good, much less to renounce self and devote their lives to the service of others.

Before leaving this branch of the subject, I will mention only one more general fact to illustrate the power that lies hid in Christ's objective manifestation. Observe the difference in respect to Christian zeal and fervor between the Methodists or the Moravians, who, in their ministrations, dwell so fondly upon this manifestation, and the Transcendentalist, who deals in abstractions.

I hasten now to show how these general conclusions are confirmed and illustrated by the experience of those Christians who have been by universal suffrage esteemed the greatest ornaments of their profession. Need I, previous to entering upon this examination, adduce the testimony of our Saviour himself as to the true source of vital, spiritual strength? The following are a few of the expressions bearing upon this point: "Come unto me all ye that labor." "Learn of me for I am meek and lowly of heart," thus designating as the proper subjects of the believer's study and imitation, those qualities which shone conspicuous in his daily life. To the same effect are those encouraging invitations: "Ho! every one that thirsteth." "I am the bread of life." "I am the vine,"

"I am the way, the truth and the life." The writings of the Apostles abound with passages, whose only natural interpretation implies an experience of that redemption which is through the life of Christ. Thus Gal. 2: 20, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me." 1st Cor. 2: 16, "But we have the mind of Christ." 1 Cor. 1: 23, "But we preach Christ crucified to the Jews a stumbling block," &c. "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." "Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Eph. 3: 8, 17, 18, 19. "To me this grace is given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Eph. 4: 13, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Phil. 3: 8. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my lord." What this knowledge is appears in the following verse, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." 2 Cor. 4. 10, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the *life* also of Jesus may be made manifest in our body." The words of Peter to Cornelius and others in Acts 10, are to the same effect. Christ is the burden of his remarks and Christ too in his outward life, his manifestation of mercy, benevolence and sufferings.

Coming down now to subsequent times let us hear the gentle *Chrysostom*, one of the most successful preachers of his time: "No one can declare the word of truth in whom Christ dwell-

eth not, and out of whom Christ speaketh not." Such declarations as these may be taken as true indications of what their authors had experienced in their own hearts to be the source of saving power. After enumerating the sufferings and dangers which Paul endured with rejoicing, Chrysostom says, "His love for Christ effected these things, wherefore he saith in all these things "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." And marvel not; for if our love to man often produce contempt of death, what should not our love to Christ effect? What difficulties should it not render light? Thus to the Apostle did everything seem easy to endure because he regarded Christ alone, loved him alone." "Let no one then distrust, let no one despair. For if ye devote your whole hearts to Christ nothing can hinder you from receiving the same grace as Paul."

Richard Baxter says of the books which he read about the period of his conversion, that "they produced a higher value, for the redemption of Christ and greater ardor of devotedness to the Redeemer himself." His latest reflections embody the following sentiments: "When God hath illuminated them and broken their hearts they must have Christ or they die." "God forbid that they who have undertaken the sacred office of revealing Christ to the world should make light of him themselves. God knows we are all so low in our estimation of Christ we have come to be ashamed of our best sermons."—"Do your souls cleave to Christ and embrace him with the strongest of your affections? Do your hearts beat more strongly towards Christ than anything else?"

John Bunyan in his tract entitled "Grace abounding to the chief of sinners" has scattered here and there throughout the account of his conversion such passages as the following, which show how far the life of Christ was an operative element in effecting that change.

"The great God was very good to me. I saw with great evidence from the four evangelists the wonderful words of God

in giving Jesus Christ to save us from his birth even to his ascension. Methought I was as if I had seen him grow up, as if I had seen him walk through the world, from the cradle to the cross, to which also when he came I saw how gently he gave himself to be hanged and nailed on it." "Now the most free and full and gracious words of the Gospel were the greatest torment to me, yea nothing so afflicted me as the thoughts of Jesus Christ, the remembrance of a Saviour; because I had cast him off brought forth the villainy of my sin. Nothing did twinge my conscience like this, every thing that I thought of the Lord Jesus, of his grace, love, goodness, kindness, gentleness, meekness, death, blood, promises, and blessed exhortations, comforts and consolations, it went to my soul like a sword." "After which the Lord came in upon my soul with some sure peace and comfort through Christ, for he did give me many sweet discoveries of his blessed grace through him.—Wherefore now I did much labor to hold forth Jesus Christ in all his offices, relations and benefits into the world.,' "I never had in all my life so great an inlet into the word of God as now. Those scriptures that I saw nothing in before are made to shine upon me. Jesus Christ was never more real and apparent than now here (in prison) I have seen and felt him indeed."

Archbishop Leighton, always a favorite with the devout and heavenly minded, in a letter written on a subject not necessitating the introduction of religious reflections, gives a strong incidental proof of his Christward bent of mind:

"I am glad to hear of the welfare of you all, and above all things wish for myself and you all our daily increase in likeness to Jesus Christ and growing heavenwards where he is who is our treasure." "May our dear Redeemer Jesus impress upon your minds a lively representation of his own meek and immaculate heart."

Archbishop Usher declares our Saviour to be "a fountain

that cannot be exhausted, a well-spring of grace that cannot be diminished; because it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell." Some of his letters begin with "Health from the fountain of health, our Lord Jesus Christ."

Philip Doddridge. "Pray for me that God may fill my soul with his presence; that Christ may live and reign in my heart, and that love to him and zeal for him may swallow up every other passion, that I may have more confirmed resolutions for that best of masters." In this passage we have a clear distinction made between God, abstractly and absolutely such, and Christ the manifestation of God, and we see that sanctifying power was associated, in the mind of Doddridge, with this last view of God manifest in the flesh. Again, "God has shewed me by some painful instances how precarious the most promising hopes are, that I may trust not in myself, nor in man, but in his *grace in Christ Jesus*, on which I desire to live more and more myself, and to which I would daily recommend my pupils, my children, and all my friends." Now is this "grace in Christ Jesus" a present effluence from his life fastened by the Holy Spirit on the heart, or does it imply merely the dogma of Imputation exerting no subjective influence upon men but operating only on God? Even if Doddridge had asserted this latter explanation of his words, I should believe that he *meant* the former. In his journal he warns himself to "daily exercise of faith in Christ as teacher, atonement, intercessor, governor, example, strength and guardian." His "Rise and Progress" contains the following which may be regarded as a representative passage: "You must form yourself, as much as possible, according to the temper and manner of Jesus. You must make it the great point of your ambition, (and a nobler view you cannot entertain) to be a living image of Christ, that, so far as circumstances will allow, even those who have heard and read but little of him may, by observing you, in some measure see and know what kind of a life that of the blessed

Jesus was. And this must be your constant care and prevailing character as long as you live."

David Brainerd. The following passages are selected out of many of similar import which occur throughout the very full record he has left us of his conversion: "Enjoyed a sweet melting season of divine things. If ever I felt the temper of Christ I had some sense of it now." "I have no confidence to hold up my face even before my fellow worms, but only when my soul confides in God and I find the sweet temper of Christ the spirit of humility, solemnity and mortification, and resignation alive in my soul." "Preached from John 6: 67. I felt freedom to open the love of Christ to his own dear disciples.—When the rest of the world forsakes him he then turns to his own and says, "Will ye also go away?" Was afraid I should forsake the fountain of living waters and attempt to derive satisfaction from broken cisterns." "The Lord, I am persuaded, enabled me in a manner somewhat uncommon, to set before the Indians the Lord Jesus Christ, as a kind and compassionate Saviour." "It was surprising to see how their hearts seemed to be pierced with the tender and melting invitations of the Gospel."

"Preached from Luke 4: 16—21. The word was attended with power." Here he employed a text which recapitulates in the language of prophecy the benevolent offices of Christ. "My work among the Indians so far has been carried on by almost one continued strain of gospel invitation to perishing sinners." "This great awakening, this surprising concern was never excited by any harangues of terror but always appeared most remarkable when I insisted upon the compassion of the dying Saviour and the free offers of divine grace to needy distressed sinners." "Discoursed from John 11.—Divine truths made deep impressions upon many in the assembly. Numbers were affected with a view of the power of Christ manifested in his raising the dead." "Opened and

made remarks upon the sacred story of our Lord's transfiguration. Had a principal view in insisting upon this passage of scripture to the edification and consolation of God's people.— Observed some that I have reason to think are truly such exceedingly affected with an account of the glory of Christ in his transfiguration and filled with longing desires of being with him." "Discoursed upon the story of the young man in Matt. 9: 16—22. God made it seasonable, as I am persuaded, to some souls who were in danger of imbibing that pernicious error that if men will but live soberly and honestly, there is then no danger or doubt of their salvation." "I cannot but take notice that ever since my first coming among the Indians I have been favored with uncommon assistance whenever I have made Christ the centre and mark of all my discourses. He was the principal scope and drift of all my discourses to this people for months together." "I have oftentimes remarked with admiration that whatever subject I have been treating upon I have been naturally and easily led to Christ as the substance of every subject. Never did I find so much freedom and assistance in making all the various lines of my discourses meet together and centre in Christ as I have frequently done among these Indians." "This was the preaching God made use of for the awakening of sinners and the propagation of this work of grace among the Indians."

"I have sometimes formerly in reading the Apostle's discourse to Cornelius (Acts 10) wondered to see him so quickly introduce the Lord Jesus into his sermon, and so entirely dwell upon him through the whole of it, observing him in this point widely to differ from many of our modern preachers, but latterly this has not seemed strange since Christ has appeared to be the substance of the gospel." "Happy experience as well as the word of God and the example of Christ and his Apostles has taught me that the very method of preaching which is best suited to awaken in mankind a sense and lively apprehension of

their depravity and to excite them to seek after a change of heart through the grace that is in Christ, is likely to be most successful in the reformation of their external conduct."

Richard Cecil. "I feel, and would urge with all possible strength on others, that Jesus Christ is our All in All." "I am to partake as a member of Christ the sufferings of Christ." His biographer says that "as he drew near his death, his one topic was Jesus Christ. His apprehensions of the importance of being spiritually united to him, were more distinct and simple, if possible, than at any former period." "I derive my whole consolation from meditating on the Godhead and character of Jesus, in whom I place all my hope." "No one is kind enough, gentle enough, forbearing and forgiving enough. We find throughout our Lord's history the strongest traits of compassion." "Thus far respecting literature, but let me again and again remind you that great as that is, both that, and every thing else are but dung and dross to the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Pray therefore my dear child to the Holy Spirit to give you this life and light in your heart." The gradual development of his religious character may be gathered from the following extracts from his letters. "When I was about twenty years old I became utterly sick of the vanity and disgusted with the folly of the world. I had no thought of Jesus Christ. To worship the Supreme Being however, seemed somewhat dignified. There was something grand and elevated in the idea." "I have lately been selecting some of B——s letters for publication. He begins with Jesus Christ, carries him through and closes with him. I feel as I read his letters, Why you said this in the last sentence! What nothing else! And yet I confess that when I have walked out and my mind has been a good deal exercised on his letters, I have caught a sympathy. It is one thing, without variety or relief, but this one thing is a *talisman.*" "To a certain degree, if a man finds his habits diverting him from Jesus Christ, as the grand, prominent, only feature, he

must force himself to choose such topics as shall lead his mind to him. I am obliged to subject myself to this discipline. I frequently choose subjects and enter into my plan before I discover that the Saviour occupies a part too subordinate. I throw them away and take up others which point more directly and naturally to him." "I remember the time when, even after I became really serious in religion, I could not understand what St. Paul meant by talking of the glory and excellency of Christ in such hyperbolical terms, and always dwelling on the subject. But I NOW understand why he did so, and wonder no more, for there is no other subject comparatively worthy our thoughts, and therefore it is that advanced Christians dwell on little else. I am fully persuaded that the whole world becomes vain and empty, to a man, in proportion as he enters into living views of Jesus Christ." "A sick woman said to me, 'Sir, I have no notion of God. You talk to me about him, but I cannot get a single idea that seems to contain anything.' To this I answered, But you know how to conceive of Jesus Christ, God *comes down* to you in him full of kindness and condescension. 'Ah sir! that gives me something to lay hold on. *There* I can rest, I understand God in his Son.'" "The knowledge of Jesus Christ is a wonderful mystery. Some men think they preach Christ, because they name him every two minutes in their sermons. But this is not preaching Christ. To understand and enter into and open his various offices and characters, his relation to us and ours to him, and to God the Father through him. This is the knowledge of Christ. The Divines of the present day are stunted dwarfs in this knowledge compared with the great men of the last age. To know Jesus Christ for ourselves is to make him a consolation, delight, strength, righteousness, companion and end."

Henry Martyn. The death of his Father led him to make it the occasion of religious reflection, and scriptural study. He "began with the Acts, as being the most amusing." The views

he there gained of the doctrines of the Apostles "corresponded nearly enough with the few notions he had received in his early youth." He was induced to pray, "thanking God in general for having sent Christ into the world." He took up the "Rise and Progress," but would not read the first part because it made religion to consist too much in humiliation." He says in a letter to his sister; "For a long time I read the Bible unenlightened; soon however I began to attend more diligently to the words of our Saviour in the New Testament, and to devour them with delight." "I was for a long time stationary. That which I now see I was lamentably deficient in, was a humble and contrite spirit, in which I should have perceived more clearly the excellency of Christ." I sought academical honors. I obtained my highest wishes, but found I had grasped a shadow, so certain is it that he who drinks of the water of the well of this life shall thirst again, and that it is the water that springs up to everlasting life, which alone affords never failing refreshment." "Oh may we experience Christ to be our all in all, not only as our Redeemer, but as the fountain of grace." "In morning prayer, as usual, my soul longed to leave its corruptions, to think of Christ and live by him. I think of the love of Christ which was so disinterested, how he passed his life, going about doing good." "On the road I experienced a sweet sense of Divine presence. I was thinking of the love of Christ, and of his unparalleled humility." I had a sweet sense of the presence of our dear Redeemer. I was above an hour with Christ speaking to him chiefly of my future life in his service. I determined on entire devotedness though with trembling. But should I fear pain when Christ was so agonized for me? No! Come what will, I am determined, through God, to be a fellow-worker with Christ." "Mr. Cecil showed me a letter in Swartz's own hand writing. Its contents were very experimental, applicable to my own case. The *life* of faith in Jesus is what I want." On the eve of his departure for India, he

preached a sermon from Matt. 28: 18, 20. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations," &c. Can any one doubt what was the source of spiritual strength to him at that time? "I was a little disturbed, but Luke 10th and above all our Lord's last address to his disciples, John 14: 16 strengthened me." "I want above all a meek, serious, resigned, Christ-like spirit." "Henceforth let my soul, humbly depending upon the grace of Christ, perfect holiness in the fear of God, and show towards all, whether Europeans or natives, the mind that was in Christ Jesus." "Preached to the natives for the last time, giving them an account of the life, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus as well as a summary of his heavenly doctrine." "My views of my Saviour are inexpressibly consoling. This is my bliss that Christ is all." "The more they wish me to give up this one point, the Divinity of Christ, the more I seem to feel the necessity of it and rejoice and glory in it. Indeed I trust I would sooner give up my life than surrender it." This last extract is very significant, for it shows how in trials the Christian leans upon Christ. If it had been merely the abstract principles of our faith which were the source of his consolation, Martyn would not have been so tenacious of the metaphysical rank of Christ. He would have said as many do now-a-days: the value of the principles does not depend on the nature of the medium through which they were promulgated. But Martyn felt intensely, in his trying situation, the value of a faith of authority. He felt too that if he could not rest his faith on an authoritative basis he could exert no authority with others. His attachment to the doctrine of Christ's Divinity, however the result of education, was at bottom sustained by a deep-felt want of the religious nature which demanded an authority higher than reason or conscience as the basis of vital piety. (The example of the Greek philosophers shows this.) Those who are constrained to deny the Deity of Christ must accustom themselves to think often of him as God

manifest in the flesh, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person. The human heart demands that this be done.

Legh Richmond. He took his first text from 1st Cor. 2: 2. "For I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified," and from this he preached at every returning anniversary of his incumbency. "Christ living, Christ dying, Christ obeying, Christ risen, Christ ascended and Christ interceding for sinners. This is the true bread of life." Preach to the heathen Christ and his blood, his sufferings and his death, if you would have your words to gain entrance among them." "You will naturally wish to know my usual matter and manner of preaching. In *matter* I keep the Lord Jesus continually present, and experimentally applied to the consciences, affections and understandings of the hearers. My people are constantly used to the exhibition of the saving offices of Christ as prophet, priest and king, all in all, strengthening, comforting, guiding and making the believing sinner meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. I preach the duties of christians, not as detached and separable appendages to doctrines, but as intimately connected with them and flowing from them, still keeping the work of the Holy Spirit in view as convincing, directing and as revealing Jesus as the principle of both justification by faith alone, and sanctification through the Holy Spirit. These rich, never-failing and consolating truths I feel to be the great subject and object of the christian ministry, and as such I have preached them fully, freely and experimentally." In his affliction at the loss of his son, he cries, "Lord make *Christ* everything to me, and then all will be well."

Oberlin. "In uniting our hearts and minds with the Lord Jesus Christ, we espouse his interests, and seek to take part in the great work of freeing the human family from its innumerable sins of soul and body. This is the purpose which animates the souls of Christians, the true disciples of the Lord Jesus."

"Who is it that have a right to be called Christians? It is those who give themselves with the heart, soul and spirit to the Lord Jesus, who keep diligently all our Lord has commanded his disciples and endeavor to become more and more clearly united with their Master."

Chalmers. "Felt the relapses of a wandering and worldly speculation, felt much comfort in the command to believe in Christ, acknowledged him as my Saviour and dedicated myself to him as the alone rock of my confidence. O! the fullness and sufficiency that lie in him! O! that I could sit humbly at the feet of Christ and listen to his sayings with the docility of a child!" "I would have you look unto Jesus, and if truth and friendship have a power to charm you into tranquility you have them here. Oh that I could give you a real and living impression of him! O! that I could fix in your hearts the image of him, such as he is!" Choose Christ my brethren, let him enter into your hearts by faith, and let him dwell continually there. Cultivate a daily intercourse and a growing acquaintance with him." "I do feel it a very great and prevailing defect in my own compositions, that, in many of the separate portions, it would be difficult to recognize the presence of Him who ought to be all in all."

Mrs. Judson. After being advised to pray for mercy in her distressed state of mind and continuing for weeks in constant reading and prayer, imagined herself hardly treated of God, when of a sudden she "began to discover new beauty in the way of salvation by Christ, felt happy in contemplating the character of Christ, and particularly that disposition which led him to suffer so much for the sake of doing the will and promoting the glory of his Heavenly Father." "I daily make some new discoveries of the vileness and evil of my heart, yet still I see a beauty in the character of Christ that makes me ardently desire to be like him." "Oh how condescending did the Divine Redeemer appear." "Growth in grace will con-

scquently lead them to know more about Jesus Christ. He will appear to them daily more needful as a prophet, priest and king; his character more lovely and his spirit more desirable." I have sometimes asked myself whether my love for Jesus was sufficiently strong to induce me to forsake all for his cause? I have felt satisfied that I loved him on account of his own glorious perfections." "When I get near to God and discern the excellence of the character of the Lord Jesus, I feel desirous that the whole world should become acquainted with this Saviour." "We have been reading at our daily worship the seven last chapters of John and the beginning of Acts, and I think we never enjoyed so much in reading the Scriptures together, and in conversing on the sufferings and death of Christ, his instructions to his disciples, as he led them through those amazing scenes. I never entered so much into the feelings of the disciples when receiving his last instructions, when deserting him through fear, when following him to the cross, when consigning him to the tomb. And I could almost participate in their joy when they saw him risen from the dead, when he appeared in the midst of them telling them that he had all power in heaven and earth. They *felt* that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of God, and, no longer afraid of the face of man, they announced themselves the followers of Jesus." This is the language of one not accustomed to rely, as a source of saving power, upon any other aspect or exhibition of truth than that presented in the whole manifestation of Christ.

THIRD DISSERTATION.

"So far as Christian Salvation is a change effected in individuals, and may be known to them, and be by them described to others, does the saving power of Christ eminently attend upon a knowledge of his life, as it is revealed in his manifestation, from his birth to his Ascension; and is it reasonable to expect that the redeeming effect of this saving power will be proportioned to the faithfulness with which his life is studied, and the perfectness with which it becomes known and is contemplated?"

The terms of this question prescribe the limits of the present discussion. It proposes, not a speculative, but a practical inquiry. It waives an examination of the abstruse philosophy of Christian Salvation, which endeavors to explain the mysteries of the Divine Nature and Government, and asks—What is the "saving power" as recognized in the human consciousness? It turns from all theories of the mysterious nature of the person of Jesus, to ask—What has he actually been, and what is he designed to be, to human hearts? What relation does his life bear to the religion which speaks in his name, and to the true spiritual development of the world? The subject touches a chord that must vibrate in all believing hearts. Speculative discussions concerning the mysteries of Christ's nature sever the Church into discordant fragments. The question what he

is to lowly disciples, awakens the same answer in unnumbered hearts, and causes the same confession to tremble upon unnumbered lips.

The first thing which suggests itself, as we approach the subject, is the fact that a sentiment of profound personal reverence for Jesus has been one of the most characteristic features of the life of the Church. Jesus has been a "real presence" in its midst. His disciples have seldom rested in an abstract consideration of his words. The sense of personal attachment and dependence in the hearts of the first Apostles, as they stood around him in Palestine, was scarcely more profound than the same sentiment has been in fervent minds of every age.—Christendom has sought to make Jesus live again to the imagination, until every bond of union with him should become an electric chain to transmit the fires of life and love throughout the heart. The Catholic bowed before the visible representations of the Redeemer's Life and Passion; and the Puritan, who rejected these outward symbols, sought, by profound contemplation, to live in the spiritual presence of Jesus. The same tendency meets us everywhere. The Cross has floated upon the banner of each crusade against the sinning world.—Jesus himself has been lifted up to subdue the heart into penitence, and to soothe its penitence into peace. The same sentiment has appeared in Christian Art. Genius has found its highest inspiration, and won its noblest triumph, in representing upon the canvas the scenes of the Redeemer's ministry.—Though the glory of its conception could never be realized, it was moved by a ceaseless impulse to attempt the transcendent subject. This sentiment has touched the Poet's nature, and has spoken in the hymns of faith. In reality, or in imagination, Christendom has been upon one perpetual pilgrimage to Palestine, and stood looking up to Calvary with clasped hands and adoring hearts. There the devout monk looked while in his lonely cell. There the heart of the Puritan rested, in his

voyage across the sea. There the martyr turned, in the midst of his suffering, to realize the presence of his Lord; and the lights of that presence made "his face as it had been the face of an angel," while the fire kindled upon his frame. The Church has echoed the strain which the Revelations represent the company of the redeemed as chanting, and, with its myriad voices, raised the song—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and glory, and blessing."

What is the meaning of this tendency? Is it a baseless sentiment, or has it a firm and philosophical support? Is it the excitement of impassioned feeling, or is it a natural and perennial flower from the living root of faith?

The Life of Jesus is the central and vital fact in Christianity. The characteristic sentiment of the Church may be justified by various considerations; by the peculiar relation which exists between Christ's life and his teaching; by the transcendent power of a living manifestation of truth to redeem the world; by the moral revolution which such a manifestation began at once to produce; by the consciousness of true disciples; by the words of Jesus himself. We shall glance at each of these considerations in the order in which they have been named.

First, we justify the sentiment to which we have referred, by the relation between the Life of Jesus and his Teaching.—That relation is altogether peculiar. In its most distinctive element, nothing resembles it in the history of man. Jesus wrote nothing during his ministry. He revealed the truth through a divine life. He sought to communicate it in no other way.—And, therefore, he must himself be lifted up in every age, that successive generations may behold the divine record of the Revelation which he came to impart.

We do not forget the instructions in his precepts and discourses, which were afterwards recorded by his disciples. But how were those instructions given? They present no features of an elaborated system. If we compare the teachings of

Jesus with the treatises in which other minds have attempted to unfold theological or moral truth, the difference between them instantly appears. Christ spoke in miscellaneous conversations. He went about amidst the varied scenes of human life. He was a guest at the marriage-feast. He entered the bereaved home. He met the whole and the diseased, the lowly and the proud, the penitent and the still sinning heart, to do and to say what each incident and manifestation of character suggested to his perfect love. His conversations are a part of his life; and the record of those conversations is the sketching of one feature of that life as it revealed itself to those who looked upon it first, and an attempt to transmit its image and expression to the disciples of every time.

It is the distinctive peculiarity of Christianity, that it is a religion which is not taught in words. Its doctrines, its precepts, its spirit, its results, all appear in Christ's personal manifestation from his Baptism to his Ascension. We do not simply mean that he was a bright example of his own instructions. There was indeed a divine consistency between his words and acts. The robe which he wore at his Crucifixion was a symbol of his moral life. There was no seam upon his garment. In this respect Jesus as greatly transcends other instructors of the race, as Christianity transcends other systems of faith. But the life of Jesus is more than an example of the truth. It is itself the truth. We cannot fully understand the spiritual principles in his conversations without referring to the circumstances which led to their expression. We cannot separate one of these gems from its fitting place in his personal history, without dimming its lustre. The character of other teachers may do little to elucidate their doctrine. Their words have a deeper meaning than their life. Their Ideal immeasurably transcends the Actual. In the life of Jesus the Actual is the Ideal;—unattained, uncomprehended, through twenty centuries of reverent discipleship. The meekness of Christianity is not

taught by Christ's words of gentleness alone, but by that silent patience which was smitten and reviled. The doctrine of submission is revealed in the agony of Gethsemane. Love appears in the sacrifice of Calvary. As Jesus himself rises more clearly before the mind, in his Temptation or his Compassion, in his Submission or in his Sacrifice, his words shine with a brighter light. No abstract examination will disclose their treasures of thought and truth. We go back to him to fill out the meaning of every declaration from his lips; and when, by a kindred life, man can really apprehend that yet unfathomed soul, the revelation shall be opened in its depth and height. Men have sometimes separated Christ's instructions from himself, and asked—"What truth did he reveal, which is not somewhere intimated in the words of others?" We do not stop to insist that we read the words of others under the influence of Christianity, and often seem to find a teaching in them now, that far surpasses the idea which they were intended to convey. We reply, that to forget Christ himself, is to blot out the profoundest meaning of his teaching, and destroy the brightest feature of his revelation. Withdraw the sunlight of the life of Jesus from his words, and he may not appear to be essentially distinct from some of the brighter stars in the firmament of human thought.

Christianity abounds with illustrations to show how Jesus himself becomes the Revelation of the Truth. We select the idea of God, and of the relation that exists between the Infinite Father and the human soul. The life of Jesus is a new and peculiar revelation of God. It is in harmony with every other expression of the Infinite nature, but it is a manifestation which no other medium could so well impart. No forms of matter, however grand, can so fully or so distinctly express the mind and heart of God, as one speaking, living, spotless soul. Some men, as they look at the grandeur of this boundless universe, deem it unphilosophical to suppose that the brief life of

Jesus, in an obscure corner of the world, is to be considered as a peculiar expression of the Infinite God. But true greatness lies in character, not in vastness. A pure act of a lowly man, may have a beauty which the Universe does not express. In one act of Jesus towards a penitent, in his sacrifice at Calvary, we see an expression of the character of God, which is more distinct than the glory of Earth and Heaven. We imply no contradiction between Christ and Nature, or any other revelation of the Invisible Father. Nature speaks of God. But we look upon Nature with different eyes, under the influence of the idea of the Father which Christianity unfolds. Her immutable laws have now an expression of love. Her occasional convulsions are robed in light. The Sun of a higher truth has risen upon this vast Universe—these mighty and silent spheres—this incomprehensible Providence—to illuminate the whole, as morning cheers the earth. Jesus has touched the eye and given it sight. In man's own nature also, there are inborn ideas of God. But those conceptions are brought forth in strength and clearness, under the inspiration of the character of Christ. There is a perfect harmony between all these modes of revelation. Yet the comparison which Jesus himself suggests, still presents itself to the mind. He is like the Sun, to bring a new light, and render visible what was dark before in Nature and in the soul. The moral manifestation in the spirit that bent over the suffering, and smiled upon the penitent, and died for the race, is most complete. The words of Jesus, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," are glorious truth.

We take another illustration, which may be more briefly stated. There is the idea of humanity—of what the soul is designed to be, and may become, in its true development; of the love and grace which it shall wear as a garment, when it rises from the grave of sin; of that immortality which will then be its inheritance,—the result of present purity—the divine flower from the seed of truth and life planted now in self-denial and in

steadfast faith. The ideal of human nature was first disclosed in the life of Jesus; and so transcendent was the teaching, so far did it surpass man's utmost dream of purity, that he has bowed before the true manifestation of himself, and called it God. Jesus revealed and glorified humanity, at the same time that he became a new manifestation of the Father. In that divine humanity, that humanized divinity, the idea of God and of the human soul are both disclosed, with the unmeasured range of truths which those revelations involve and contain.

We forbear from more extended illustrations. The tendency of Christendom to fasten its eyes upon Jesus is not a mere sentiment. It is a conscious or an implied acknowledgement of the great feature of the Christian system, to which we have referred. Men have looked beyond the revelation in the word, to the higher revelation in the action of a Godlike soul. We have spoken of the relation between Jesus and his teaching. The term relation does not adequately express the fact. A relation implies a connection between two different things. Here there is identity. The expression, "I am the Truth," has a literal signification. And it must be forever true, that in exact proportion as the life of Jesus shall be comprehended, his doctrine will reveal its matchless beauty to the world.

We pass to the second general consideration. The tendency of Christendom to look to Jesus himself, is justified by the divine power of a living manifestation of truth to redeem the world. The Genius of Christianity everywhere refuses abstract statements of religious truth. It meets the wants of the intellect. But it speaks at the same time to other and deeper powers. It makes a direct appeal to the soul by glorious parables, and the history of a Godlike life. It presents instructions in forms which fill the mind and heart and conscience, and constrain the entire nature to adoration. It recognizes the law of spiritual growth which is revealed in the development of the mind of every child. The idea of the parent—the highest earthly

relation—and the conception of filial duty, do not come by appeals to the intellect. They come with the ministry of that love which folds us in its arms, and bears us on its bosom. So it is with the idea of the invisible Father, and of man's supreme relation to Him. Christianity presents the manifestation of His love directly to the soul, and thus developes the idea of God, and that filial reverence for Him, which may make the life of the spiritual a perpetual hymn. Therefore Jesus spoke to uneducated men, and, by direct appeals to their moral nature, revealed to their consciousness the highest truths. As his parables lived in their imagination, or as they gazed upon himself, life filled their souls. And when the new spirit grew into strength, and they reflected upon its nature, and distinguished the ideas to which it gave birth, men drew out those grand conclusions which became the inspiration and the food of their highest thought.

It is at once the distinction and the glory of Christianity that it refuses abstract statements. We know not how to give adequate expression to the fact, but we know that moral light and life are most surely imparted to the soul, by immediate contact with living purity. The holiness of a parent, brooding over the child, immeasurably more than words, regenerates his being. The moral nature grows, when we come into a pure spiritual presence. We feel the sentiment of love beginning to burn—we know not and ask not how—as we gaze, and admire, and worship. We breathe a holier air. By a sure, though unconscious influence, the blood receives a new vitality, and pours health through head and heart, and limb and member. When the spirit of God can thus be brought into contact with the spirit of man, his whole nature will feel the redeeming presence. We need these living manifestations. And therefore the Word became flesh, to speak to our human nature, and to flood the lowly heart with heavenly impulses and divinest truth. Man is not left to an abstraction. He is not left to

elaborate the truth of God's love from the often conflicting appearances of nature. He beholds the Cross; and while he looks, mind, and heart, and will, are taken captive in one sentiment of devotion. The direct presence of a divine spirit infused new thoughts and new life into the souls of the first Apostles, when their theories of the expected Messiah were altogether false. When every other ministry must have failed, that direct appeal to the moral nature triumphed over every opposition of feeling, every prejudice of the mind, every resistance of the will. It regenerated thought by the growth of the new germ of life, and imbued humanity with the spirit of the children of God.

There is a method of regarding religious truths which is too exclusively intellectual. It separates those truths from their manifestations. It attempts to reason out the doctrines of faith, the laws of morality which Jesus declared, with no direct reference to himself. It places law above persons. It reveres intellect with a supreme homage, and empties its creed of those divine persuasions of the heart which logic may not perfectly demonstrate. It asks, "What truths did Jesus declare which must remain the same, though his life could be erased from the history of the world, because they express the eternal laws of Nature and of the Soul?"

The words of Jesus do express the everlasting laws of Nature and of Life. That view of his teaching is not to be forgotten. It must be remembered to satisfy one element in every thinking mind. When presented in its power, it drivesback the soul which assails the authority of religious truths, overwhelmed by irresistible convictions. "He that rejecteth me," said Jesus, "and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." Upon this foundation, the doctrine of an eternal judgment seat may be securely built, and the waves of a sea of doubt shall roll against it in vain. Yet this impersonal view

alone is not the fitting view for man. It shuts out great spheres of our being from due consideration, and inevitably leads to distorted conclusions. The gravest errors in religious theories have resulted from the attempt to gain a purely intellectual faith. The intellect looks up to God to reason upon his incomprehensible nature, and it obtains the idea of sovereign, impersonal, unchanging Law—a majestic, yet a cold and dread thought—awakening awe more than love. But when the affections of the heart are included in the argument, as intimations of the nature of Him who inspired them all, man beholds a personal Father. Then, upon the wing of prayer whose flight no speculation can chain or bound, the soul ascends to the God of the Christian teaching, bending over every lowly and loving child in His tender compassion and omnipresent mercy. Man is a creature of feeling as well as of intellect. He must embrace the truth which his heart craves, that he may escape from distorted conclusions, and receive the impulses which have greatest redeeming power. We cannot nullify this law of being. The abstract names of virtue have no such power as the words Gethsemane and Olivet and Calvary. We cling to concrete forms. We want something that speaks to sense and sentiment, as well as thought. Therefore we remember the names of martyrs. We exalt the actual models of excellence into the company of Saints. If we separate the principles in the teaching of Jesus from himself, we overlook the central power in Christianity, and transgress against the law of human nature. We take away the Lord, and leave only the words Truth, Purity, Love, instead of that suffering, redeeming, God-like life, which the heart may adore and love with thrills of joy. Arguments addressed to its understanding could not meet the great want of humanity. The Law could not accomplish its deliverance. It needed the manifestation of the Son, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," yet pure as the holiness of God. It needed an expression of truth to which it could

surrender its heart in a total allegiance; an expression which could melt its obduracy, and electrify and control its will.—Let man listen to the living voice. Let him follow in the steps of the living Jesus. Let him gaze upon his pierced hands and bleeding side, and he will know the fullness of his saving power.

Two or three additional considerations remain which may be briefly noticed. History sustains the position which we have attempted to establish. It is a historic fact, that just when the life of Jesus appeared, a change, which seems almost as miraculous as his life, began to manifest itself in the character of men. Whatever theory of the nature of Jesus we may embrace, this fact still remains. It is the central truth in the history of the world. If we trace back to its source the flood of redeeming influences, in which multitudes washed away their sins, which rose and gathered strength to sweep away the idolatries that were upheld by the sanction of ages and the might of Empires, we come to that divine life in Palestine.—There was the birth of a new power, which is slowly and majestically moving on to accomplish its own prophecy of Universal Empire. And what was the teaching of that age of moral wonders? Mainly, a repetition of the story of the Redeemer's life. "Christ and Him crucified," was the constant theme. The world had not then begun to think of separating Christ's teachings from himself. Men repeated the story of the Miracle and the Cross; of that ministering Love, and the deserted Tomb. They studied truth in its living expressions. They gazed upon the countenance of Jesus until they were transfigured too. The Publican and the Sinner became the Saint and the Martyr, and the grand moral revolution began, at whose coming, Earth and Heaven rejoiced together.

The vital element of this great change cannot be mistaken or overlooked. Spiritual truths had been taught before, in words of wisdom and of eloquence. Pure minds had labored

to promote the moral welfare of the race. Yet these efforts were like pebbles against the tide. "Notwithstanding its greater measure of truth," as it has been justly said, "Christianity would have failed like the philosophies of ancient times, had it been presented as a system of abstract thought. But the "Word became flesh," and dwelt in the midst of men. The Spirit of God, in this new expression of its character and love, this new Creation, moved over the face of the deep. It came into the chaos of human experience and human passions, to dispel the darkness, and create the order and the life of Heaven. The life of God came into immediate contact with the life of men, and humanity began to be divine.

Again: the consciousness of lowly disciples corresponds with the conclusions of argument and the teaching of history. What is that strong personal affection for Jesus, to which we referred in the beginning of our discussion, but an expression of the general consciousness of the Christian World? This tendency of Christendom explains itself, and is its own justification.—Disciples have clung to Jesus, and bathed his feet with their tears, because they found in him deliverance and light and power. There the truth was luminous to every faculty of their nature. There, the spirit of divinity seemed to bend to the depths in which humanity was lying, to stretch forth its hand to save. There was a life which spanned and filled the vast gulf between man and, God; which touched human nature on one side of its being, and on the other, was one with the Infinite Father—a life which could bring God and man into blessed unity. The world has seldom stopped to give a philosophical account of this tendency to look to Jesus; but faithful disciples have found the mind illuminated and the heart alive; they have found that they could "do all things" in the power of his presence,—and that was enough. When he laid his hands upon humanity, it felt that it received the Holy Ghost. Man knows not whence the Spirit cometh, or whither

it goeth. He cannot track its mysterious way. But he knows, by his experience, that it proceedeth from the Son, and he celebrates that redeeming influence in words and tears of joy. "The sheep have known the voice of the Good Shepherd," and have followed him into the fold of peace.

Once more. The reasons for exalting the life of Jesus culminate in the disciple's mind, in the consideration that His direct teaching calls upon men to look to Himself. It is unnecessary to adduce quotations in proof of this assertion. We remember the declaration, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." We remember the manifold expressions which reiterate the same idea in various forms. We remember that the truths, which the disciples could not bear while Jesus was present with them, were to be revealed to their clearer apprehension of his character, after he had gone away. The gift of "the Comforter, to lead them into all truth," was this gradual opening of his character to their souls—this spiritual coming to their consciousness. The teaching of Jesus is uniform and clear. He recognized no process, by which the truth could be known, either during his actual presence, or after his Ascension, except by the growth of this divine life in obedient hearts. Without that life, the wisdom of the wise would be foolishness. With it, babes were exalted to know what Prophets and Kings desired in vain to see. As Jesus should become a real presence in human feeling, and make his abode in the Temple of the human soul, the vision of God and of His truth, of the spiritual world and immortality, would be revealed, to fill the heart with light and love and peace. From every part of his ministry the word seems to come, which once was heard from his lips: "Come unto me, all ye weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christendom has obeyed the call of Jesus, as well as the impulse of its own heart, in raising its unbroken and ever swelling chant of thanksgiving to the Redeemer's name.

A brief development of two general thoughts which grow out

of what has been already said, will close the present discussion. We see, first, the great aim which man is to strive to realize in the administration of Christian Truth. It has been frequently said, "that the great question ,is not what Jesus *was*, but what he *taught*." If the question—"What he was?"—refers to his mysterious nature, we do not urge its consideration. But it has been applied to his personal history, as well as, to speculations concerning his nature. The utmost glory of human thought, is spiritually to know what Jesus was. What can be a higher aim on Earth or in Heaven, than to seek to know what the highest expression of spiritual life, and the clearest expression of God—really is. "If I be lifted up," said Jesus, "I will draw all men unto me." To lift up that perfect picture of man and God, with its true expression! No superficial study of the life of Jesus will accomplish this. When the painter desires to portray a noble face, he studies each lineament of the countenance; he watches and strives to catch each minute, yet characteristic expression, that the man may live upon the canvas. The student of the life of Jesus is to look upon each event in his history, to gather up each expression of his spirit that the image may be complete, and the world behold the living Redeemer. Each careful examination of the details of his life, will lead to clearer perceptions of his spirit. Whoever has closely studied minute incidents in his ministry, must have often been surprised to see new views of the highest principles, breaking forth from most familiar passages. It is as if a vein of richest ore were suddenly discovered in paths which we had daily trod, with no suspicion that we were walking over such princely treasures.

What scrutiny of this divine life can be too minute? Humanity gathers the fragments of the history of its noblest names, to gain a new or a deeper impression of their characters; for it feels that there is the food for its highest nature. There is healing and life in the hem of the Redeemer's garment. Jesus is the living Gospel—the realized Ideal of

humanity. His action expresses or implies all spiritual truth, all divine morality. Let each scene live again! Let no element, which helped to form it, be forgotten! Let the imagination picture the publican and the sinner, the penitent woman, the sincere inquirer, the cavilling people, as they stood in the presence of Jesus! Let it behold him when he was pressed by tempting questions, when he conversed with the beloved disciples, when he bore the insults of the multitude—and watch the exact expression of his countenance, and feel the spirit which breathed in all his words. In precise proportion to the degree of exactness with which man can thus read the whole, he will discern the nature and the details of a divine morality, and find it moving before him, like a pillar of cloud and fire, to guide his pilgrim way.

To know what Jesus was! It is an attainment that implies a wide culture, as well as an exact acquaintance with Christ's personal history. There is an intimate relation between Christian truth and human knowledge. To know clearly what Jesus was, man must explore many spheres of thought. Directly, or indirectly, the highest intellectual acquisition may aid his conception. He is not only to study the details of Jewish customs, and the spirit of Jewish law; not only to learn the geography of Palestine, the criticism of the sacred books, and the character of the Jewish mind. The knowledge of the entire life of the Ancient World, of the great opposing influences to the first spread of the Christian Faith, and of the mighty conflicts of opinion in that age of wonderful progress, will assist his thought. Each controversy, which Christianity has excited in the world, tends to reveal its character. The Philosophers and Teachers of the race must be reproduced, and measured in the presence of the Son of God, that the mind may realize their greatness, and behold his divinity. Science also offers its contributions to enrich the conceptions of faith. It illustrates them by analogies, when it does not enlarge them by its attainments.

Nature, Human Wisdom, History, the World's Life, bring their tribute to the Redeemer's feet. Yet, while the Christian student gratefully gathers up this royal tribute, he remembers that its best purpose is to illustrate the highest spiritual truths. The divinest office of all knowledge is to open the way to a clearer vision of the truth and mind of God. The student of the life of Jesus welcomes all mental culture. Every acquisition assists him to express the spiritual greatness of the Son of God. Every gem may be set in the crown to be placed upon his brow. Schleiermacher has beautifully said, "that all our progress in divine knowledge consists solely in more correctly understanding, and more completely appropriating to ourselves that which is in Christ." This is the grand lesson which Christianity proposes to all hearts and all ages. For, as the mind of Christ shines out in unclouded splendor, it will melt the coldest heart, and cause the flowers of Heaven to bloom where all was desolation before.

The great aim, in the administration of Christian truth, is to reveal what Jesus was. And the great result to be attained, is to reproduce the consciousness of Christ in each human heart, and in the spirit of the world. The most complete definition of Christian Salvation is—"The life of Christ in the human soul." There can be no salvation except in man's continual approximation to that result. There is no exact description of the life of a redeemed soul. There can be none. The idea of its life is to be developed from within. It requires no fixed, nor conceivable routine of action, but an ever-living spirit. Jesus does not even ask an imitation of his own acts of love. He infuses the divine sentiment itself, to open ever-enlarging conceptions of its boundless applications; and inspires man with the glorious aim of becoming a co-worker with God. So it is with every element of the life of God in the soul of man. It transcends the limits of all routine. It snaps the bonds of forms. It is a "worship in spirit and in truth." The highest genius could no more describe the measure of its action, than it could predict

the blessed ministries of an angelic nature, in the yet unknown scenes of its future being. It is unfolded from within. It is the coming of the Spirit of Christ into the bosom of human nature, to suggest his thoughts of truth, his conceptions of duty, in the midst of the work which is given to man to do.

Here is the power which has accomplished moral miracles, and will complete the renovation of the race. What has made the world new in the spirit of its civilization, in all that chiefly distinguishes it, since the day of Jesus? The light even now obtained, with its imperfect knowledge of Christ, has shone upon its conscience to produce all its great moral reformations. What great transforming influence may not be traced to this! Jesus identified himself with humanity, and sacrificed himself for its redemption. That fact contains a Gospel concerning the destiny and worth of human nature. The world beholds that Gospel, and begins to feel its influence. Tyranny relaxes its iron rule, and wields its sceptre for the welfare of its subject millions. Man begins to know the glory of the mind, and whatever can unfold its power is pressed upon his conscience with increasing force. The love of freedom moves the heart of nations, gradually to diffuse its untold blessings upon an emancipated world. The Church beholds, and more deeply feels that Gospel, and pours out its treasures to raise the Cross in every Heathen land. Ministries of charity to the sufferer, the prisoner, the slave, fill the world; ministries which shall never cease until every obedient soul becomes an angel of the love of God, and healing and deliverance are bestowed upon each diseased and burdened heart. Even the intellectual cultivation, the triumphs of Science and Art, in which we boast, are the spreading circle of the same spiritual power, as it moves over the sea of life. It is not an accidental fact that so great an intellectual life existed in the bosom of Puritanism, where religious life was so intense. Religion, as Form and Dogma, may forge the heaviest chain for human nature, because its links are fastened by a supernatural power. Religion

as Principle, Free Thought, electrifies humanity; and multitudes feel the shock, who never recognise the source of that holy fire.

Even this dim Christian consciousness has been the choicest benediction to the world; and in hearts which yielded to its higher influence, how glorious has been its work! Conceive of every triumph of Christian faith, every act of truth unknown to men, yet honored in heaven,—remember every martyr's suffering, to estimate its influence. It has unfolded itself in believing hearts to fulfil the divine promise of Jesus, and instruct them what to say and to do in every trial-moment. It has impressed the conviction of the majesty of truth, and, in the hours when the disciple stood between the crown and the cross, neither temptation nor fear shook his steadfast soul. It has revealed the glory of the Redeemer's meekness, until men could live or die amidst revilings, only to answer by serenity and prayer. It has presented the image of his resignation, until human hearts could speak the sweetest words of submission while a bloody sweat was upon the brow. It has created Apostles, Saints, the innumerable hosts of true disciples, who have walked through the world in the spirit of purity, to be clothed above in robes of white.

Christian Salvation is Christ's own life in human hearts. The statement brings new support to the doctrine which we have now presented. A routine of action may be learned and taught by some other process. A living consciousness, a new germ of life which is ever to expand into vaster proportions and higher beauty, is created by the direct presence and action of Life itself. Christendom is to obey the impulse which has moved it hitherto. Let it still look up to Jesus, the great expression of the truth and life of God, with adoring heart. Thus shall Christ indeed become "a real presence" in the Church, and in the world; revealing, to an ever purer consciousness, the truths which, even now, we cannot bear, and leading us on to the day in which all hearts shall be one in Him.

FOURTH DISSERTATION.

What historical, or other facts, may be reasonably supposed to have influenced the child Jesus to tarry in Jerusalem, and "sit in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions"? Luke 11. 41—51.

The conversation of "the child Jesus" with the doctors in the temple, possesses a two-fold interest. There is a peculiar charm in the incident itself. The whole scene, as our imagination pictures it, suggests one of the highest truths. The wonderful child is enthroned among the teachers of the law. The wisdom of the world bows before the higher wisdom of simplicity. The teacher of the letter reveres the revelation of the spirit. Wise men come in homage to the child in the temple, as they came, with adoration and with gifts, to the infant in the manger.

But the incident possesses a still deeper interest, because it is the only one in the childhood and youth of Jesus which we are permitted to know. With this single exception, the silence is unbroken respecting the whole thirty years from his infancy to his baptism. Yet it harmonizes with his wonderful being that a veil should thus be drawn over his early life.—In the study of

other great natures, we can go back to the circumstances which directed their lives; we can search for the creative influences which gave the impulse to their greatness, and which opened a way for the manifestation of their power. The mystery of their being is thus unsealed. The apparent miracle is restored to the sphere of natural laws. We ask to know more of the childhood of Jesus. What outward circumstances swayed the inherent tendencies of his nature? What creative influences surrounded him who was to re-create the world? Little is known of Joseph except his name; and nothing suggests the thought that he could have prepared the youthful Jesus for his future work. Christian Art has delighted to represent the Virgin Mother—a subject which combines the most lovely conceptions of earthly and of spiritual beauty. We imagine her countenance invested with the radiance of holy thought and a divine beauty, as she watched the babe, whom the vision of the angel had taught her to reverence, and ponders in her heart the words of the heavenly messenger. We think of the influence of that yearning and holy love. But we venerate the mother because we adore the child. There is no history to unseal the mystery of a greatness which was not the work of mortal hands. There is nothing to tempt us to explain, by the action of usual laws, that which is the great miracle of Time.

This precise view of the early life of Jesus leads us to study, with a more reverent earnestness, the single manifestation of his character which is recorded. Once, the veil of cloud is withdrawn. Visions of angels attended the Saviour's birth. The Spirit descended upon his head at his baptism. Does this incident of his childhood harmonise with the prophetic annunciations at his birth, and the wonderful gift of the Spirit at the baptismal hour? Is the moral identity complete between the babe at Bethlehem, whom wise men adored, the child in the temple, and the Teacher who spoke as "never man spake?"

The history in the Gospel of Luke is very brief. The pa-

rents of Jesus were accustomed, every year, to go up to the Feast of the Passover, and, when Jesus was twelve years old, they took him with them. When, after the fulfilment of the days, they began their homeward journey, they supposed Jesus to be in the throng of returning pilgrims. At the close of the first day, when they found him not among their kinsmen, they turned back to Jerusalem to seek him. On the third day, they found him in the Temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, and astonishing all who heard him by his understanding and his answers. To the apparent reproof of his mother on account of the anxiety which his tarrying in Jerusalem had caused, he seems to utter a reproof in reply; "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Why did Jesus tarry in Jerusalem and converse with the doctors? We have no distinct answer to this inquiry. We are left entirely to our conjectures; and these may be divided into two classes. Those of the first class rest upon such historical facts as may seem to throw light upon the account, and the influence which we may suppose them to have exerted over the mind of Jesus. Those of the second class spring from the conception which we form of the natural development of his character; beginning with the idea of his life, and regarding outward circumstances as the natural occasions for the manifestation of his spiritual being. We shall attempt to notice both these classes of conjectures in the order in which they have been named.

The age of twelve was a great era in the religious life of the Jew. At that age "children were wont to be inured to fasting," and, as it is supposed, were initiated into all the ceremonies of the Law. It is probable that they were not previously carried to the great feasts of the nation, and that Jesus first visited Jerusalem, when, at the age of twelve, he accompanied his parents to the Feast of the Passover. The period had then arrived, to

which, from the first hour of conscious thought, the youthful mind must have looked forward with ever growing enthusiasm. It was the realization of every hope and dream. Every thing connected with the passover was invested with a peculiar interest. The journey to the Holy City was a triumphal march. As they drew near to Jerusalem, the heart of the swelling multitude of pilgrims beat with one pulse of joy, and the glorious strains of the Psalms rolled from the lips of the mighty host. Thoughts of past glory, of present bondage, and future hopes, burned in every breast. The ceremonies of the Passover ministered to that enthusiasm. Each day of the feast had its appropriate observance; and its close, like its commencement, was made impressive by the most solemn rites of the Jewish worship. Revert now to the single verse which precedes the account of the incident itself, and which so fully reveals the character of Jesus,—"And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon him,"—and imagine Jesus in the midst of that splendid ceremonial.—What questions must have suggested themselves to his awakened mind! The outward ceremonies satisfied him not. They stimulated him to new inquiries. The form suggested its deepest meaning. The infinite truths which it shadowed forth opened to his view. Was it strange, that when the rites of the Feast were ended, he should seek to converse with the Doctors of the Law—those whose office it was to interpret the ceremonies and its precepts? There were three Courts of Judicature in the Temple—the Sanhedrim, and two lower tribunals.—The disciples of the doctors, and all who were present, were permitted to ask questions upon any subject which they desired to have explained. Jesus might have been in the Sanhedrim itself, to ask and answer questions, without transcending the customs of the nation. This opportunity invited an expression of inquiries which the ceremonies of the Feast, or the experiences of his previous life, might have suggested. Childhood

ponders many questions, when the infinite begins to be revealed —questions which overshadow and occupy its whole being until they can be truly solved, or vanish out of sight, in the growth of the soul. It was most natural for the child Jesus to tarry in Jerusalem. He might have supposed that his parents would still believe in him and trust him, although he did not return with the company. Or, he might have been so completely absorbed in the consciousness of his relation to God, that every human relation vanished, for the moment, from his mind. In either case, the act implies no breach of filial duty, and may be reconciled with the noblest conceptions of his life.

Another conjecture may be made, which, also, has a basis of historic fact. The age of twelve was an era in the life of the Jew, alike, in respect to his worldly occupation, and his religious experience. A Jewish proverb says,—"Let a man deal gently with his son, until he come to be twelve years old; but, from that time, let him descend with him into his way of living." The youth was then to be strictly inured to his worldly business. The power of the father over his child was almost unlimited. Without his consent, no choice of occupation could be made. Still, the child may have been allowed to indicate that choice, at the appointed age. Jesus went down to Nazareth and was "subject" to his parents; employed in his father's usual occupation until the age of thirty—the period at which the Priests were accustomed to begin their public work. Yet, while thus faithful to this outward duty, his higher choice, for the future, might have been freely expressed. We may regard his conversation, in the temple, in the first hour of independent thought, as a manifestation of this great purpose of his soul. It was a consecration of himself, in his own feeling, and in the presence of those around him; a vow of youth which was to be fulfilled when the time for its fulfilment should fully come. This conjecture may explain the answer to his parents. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" It takes

away, the apparently, unfilial tone, in which, some imagine the words to have been spoken, and makes them a solemn declaration of the soul's aspiration and aim.

Such conjectures deserve attention, as throwing light upon particulars in the history. But, we can only gain a just view of the whole, when we attempt to trace the natural unfolding of his mind. We do not, always, imagine Jesus as acting in accordance with the truest nature. We make his life mechanical, when we imply that it was directed by arbitrary design, rather than by the free impulse of the Spirit, which gave him, each moment, what he was to say and to do. We attribute to precise plan, that which was the beautiful outflowing of his divine love. Surrounding circumstances, historic incidents, fail to *explain* this action. They simply furnished occasions for the soul's expression. He conformed to the custom of the nation in the observances of the Synagogue, in the period of entering upon his public work. Yet every act of his life, from his conversation in the temple, to the last interview with the twelve, was the natural manifestation of the Spirit which filled his soul, and, by a divine intuition, flowed out to meet the call of every hour.

Begin with the idea of "The *child* Jesus." Commentators sometimes interpret this passage according to their conception of Jesus *after* his public work had begun; and attribute to the child, thoughts which belonged to the avowed Messiah. But, whatever theory of his nature we may embrace, we must still remember that it conformed to the usual laws of human growth. If his nature were, in the highest sense, divine, he was, nevertheless, once a child.

In the true growth of every mind, a period comes, in which, the idea of its spiritual relations and the sense of its infinite responsibilities, are revealed with new clearness and power.—Perhaps a crowd of higher thoughts may suddenly appear, as the vision of the future opens to the soul when the hand of death

removes this veil of flesh. An unusual incident in life may be the *occasion* of this new experience. The *cause* is in the growth of the mind itself. As the husk, which conceals the flower just prepared to bloom, may be suddenly removed, so the veil that remained before the eye of the prepared soul, may be rent away at once, and the whole nature be immediately raised to the consciousness of a higher world of thought. Sometimes every circumstance, in these living moments, can be precisely recalled in the memories of the past. But, if not so distinctly remembered, they constitute, nevertheless , a great era in the growth of the soul.

The conversation of Jesus with the doctors, may be regarded as such a period. The outward circumstances, the rites and associations, of the Passover, his arrival at the age of twelve, all combined to become the occasion of such a development, and to bring into clear consciousness his secret thought. And another, and still higher truth, came with this clearer consciousness. The idea of his peculiar mission, then, for the first time, arose distinctly within his mind. Mysteriously, as the fitting work of life comes to every man in his spiritual growth, yet naturally, the perception, of the ordained purpose of his being, dawned upon his soul. Ideas, which were vague and dim before, at once crystallized into clear and brilliant forms. The dreams of youthful hope suddenly became realities to his adoring sight.— In the development of his own experience, and, perhaps, in the whisper of the Spirit also, a voice seemed to speak, as distinctly as at his baptism on the banks of the Jordan, telling him what he was to do and to be.

What will he do in this new experience ? We must remember that he is the *child* Jesus still, although he has obtained a consciousness of his future work ; and that eighteen years of increase in wisdom and favor with God and man, are to pass away, before that work shall be assumed.

Where does the mind naturally turn when the idea of great

truths or of a great future work takes possession of its being? It questions the wise. It seeks communion with other minds. It goes where the Teachers are supposed to sit. It hopes to find new light for itself in the radiance of their wisdom.—There have been such passages in the experience of the noblest men—those who have afterwards communed most truly with God. They turned first to man; and, when they found, in his formalities and dogmas, no food for their hungering souls, they sought to receive, in the retirement of meditation, or in the solitude of the desert, the manna which falls directly from Heaven. Does it offend our reverence for Jesus to suppose that he might have turned to those Jewish Teachers for instruction, during one moment of his youth? It is because we forget that he was a child, and was subject to the usual law of human development. If, after eighteen years of holy communion, the hour of Temptation was to come, then this might naturally have been the momentary experience of his youth. It was the natural and proper precursor to a true preparation for his office. He, at once, perceived the poverty of soul in those teachers of the Law. His questions and his answers were beyond their skill to fathom. He never went again to the Temple to converse with the doctors. He went down to Nazareth to commune with God, in the silence of thought, working with his hands in daily toil, but educating his soul by the constant reception of inspiration from above.

The tarrying of Jesus at Jerusalem is explained by this hypothesis. We are not driven to unnatural and offensive interpretations of his bearing towards his parents. He did not remain behind them "to impress the minds of Joseph and Mary with a proper sense of his independence and divinity." He simply followed the natural leadings of his experience. The inquiry of his mother, as to the cause of his absence, was made in a tone of wonder rather than of reproof. It was no more a reproof, than the words of the sisters of Lazarus to Jesus, when

his action disappointed their natural expectation—"If thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Neither did Jesus answer the expression of his parents' solicitude in an unfilial or reproving tone. They did not comprehend his nature; nor, as some commentators imply, was it to be expected that they should. His words convey no such censure. The perception of his future work, and of his higher relation to God, did not obscure his view of his relation to them. He went back, immediately, to Nazareth, and was subject to them there. But, in the form of question, the more natural and emphatic expression of his awakened feeling, he said—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" as the simple, filial, solemn declaration of the reason of his action, and the ruling spirit of his soul.

Many interpretations of this account, which it is not necessary to specify, are met by the view which has been presented. The supposition that Jesus went among the doctors to prepare them to acknowledge his supernatural wisdom—a supposition which arose from a reluctance to regard him as asking questions, in the character of a learner—is at once set aside. If that had been his purpose, why did he not renew the conversation in succeeding years? It does not harmonize with the entire simplicity of his character, to connect such a thought with any act of his life. He wrought no miracle merely to give proof of his power. He spoke that he might instruct, and wrought wonders that he might heal and bless; and the outward proofs of his wisdom and his power, were the glorious, yet incidental, results of his words and works of love.

We return, with new confidence, from every other interpretation, to the hypothesis which is based upon this idea of the natural unfolding of his experience. The child Jesus tarried in Jerusalem among the doctors, because, at that precise moment, the impulse, to turn for light to the wisest among men, arose in his heart. He went down again to Nazareth, with his

parents, because he had fathomed the wisdom of man, and was prepared for years of silent communion with God. It is a bold and a delicate work to attempt to imagine the course of spiritual experience in the soul of Jesus. Clouded and erring minds may hardly comprehend the workings of a spotless heart. Yet no other method of interpretation will fully explain the records of his life, at once so human, and so divine.

It scarcely comes within the design of the present dissertation to develope the moral teachings of this passage in the life of Christ. When viewed as a statement of one great stage in his spiritual experience, it suggests many, and most attractive lessons. We perceive how a true mind, when first aroused to the perception of its responsibilities and its work, turns to every source of wisdom which may assist it in its preparation for future action. We see how little reliance can be placed upon man, and how entirely it is cast upon God. We see that the divine education is only gained by intense thought; and that, amidst the ceaseless toil of the hands, the soul may be built up in the highest wisdom. And, in the subjection of the future Messiah to his parents at Nazareth, we see the divine harmony, between the soul's eternal and present relations, in the view of a truly instructed mind. Great lessons may be learned from every circumstance connected with the history; and the words of Jesus, "I must be about my Father's business," come forth as the trumpet call of duty to all hearts and to all ages. The character of Jesus stands up in the same inimitable beauty, as in every other act of his life, and the moral harmony, between the babe in the manger, the child in the Temple, and the Christ in his ministry of truth and love, is unbroken and complete.

FIFTH DISSERTATION.

JESUS IN SESSION WITH JEWISH DOCTORS.

"And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the Doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions."—Luke II: 46.

This is a passage in our sacred writings, which, taking into the account all the circumstances brought into the narrative, may be regarded as almost standing alone and unparalleled among the wonderful events, recorded in the history of Providence, relating to the grand scheme of human salvation. To be able to give it the deserved, the proper place, it should hold in the succession of connected incidents, through which we arrive at a comprehensive view of redeeming mercy, as exemplified in the ministrations of the Son of God, will be an ample recompense for the intense, careful study, that may be requisite to put us in possession of the light and conviction needed.

There can be no perplexity arising from the fact, that the child Jesus, at the immature age of twelve years, was found in company with his parents attending, at Jerusalem, on the solemnities of the paschal feast. This was according to custom, and on no account wonderful, or likely to occasion surprise. When

the kind-hearted, devout parents took along with them their Son of tender years, still to be trained, by much parental assiduity, to qualification for the high distinction to which he was destined; they thought and apprehended nothing extraordinary as about to occur to give peculiarity or celebrity to this particular annual visit to the house of God, his temple at Jerusalem "where his honor dwelleth." Hitherto all was proceeding in an established, familiar, and long accustomed routine. Ordinary, though solemn and strictly religious duties were to be performed, and this without any unusual formalities, any special accompaniments to stamp a new, or some unthought of, complexion upon the service. What took place, therefore, in the sequel, was as unexpected, and as productive of astonishment, to the parents of Jesus, as to any who beheld, heard, and wondered, on that exciting occasion.

We may, therefore, assume it as an indisputable corollary, that, hitherto nothing had transpired in the domestic circle of Joseph and Mary, in their humble, quiet household at Nazareth, to excite even a presentiment of what came to be acted at the feast, so much to the astonishment of all, and so worthy to be made the theme of that serious contemplation and earnest inquiry, on which we now enter, and propose to follow up, in the hope of discovering reasons, of the highest order, for, the hitherto, unprecedented step taken, and part acted, by him, who was afterwards manifested to Israel in the avowed character of Lord and Christ.

It does not strike us as unnatural, or unmaternal, that the mother of Jesus, when she found him in contact with the highest grades of learning and authority in the nation, personally engaged in discussions so grave and profound, and so far removed from the place and position in which she had expected to find him, accosted him in a tone of mingled tenderness and chiding, as the narrative states. Had no better apology existed in the case than came within the reach of her best thoughts,—

her imagination in its most indulgent mood,—she might, no doubt, with propriety, insinuate something like unfilial inconsiderateness, or indifference to the obligations involved in the relation of children to their parents. Should children be permitted, unreproved, to agitate with solicitude and sorrow the laboring minds and aching hearts of their affectionate parents? But here a case comes before us, which transcends all ordinary experience, and soars far above the purest and best standards, by which human wisdom is able to regulate the balance of duty and obligation between parents and their offspring.

The development obtained from the statement given, will furnish a clew, which may put it in our power to unravel all the intricacies with which the subject may seem to be embarrassed. "And when they saw him they were amazed; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, how is it that ye sought me? *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*" Even at so early a period of life, when so few of our race have ever given very shining examples of maturity in just thinking, and in acute, unbiassed reasoning, it was far from being in the heart of Jesus to look scornfully on parental authority, or to countenance a plea for withdrawing the shoulder, and throwing off the yoke, of filial obedience. His justification of himself, under a seeming imputation of having too lightly emancipated himself from parental oversight and restraint, does but evince the intenseness of his filial reverence, his all-controling respect and devotedness to a Father's will. But, to man, they are but secondary honors which are due. His authorities and claims to consideration are none of them primary; but are all derived. They can never, therefore, be rightly interposed to limit the bounds of allegiance to Him who is first in the universe, first in all perfection, first in establishing all moral relations, and, preeminently, entitled to the place and dignities appropriately

belonging to a Father. As much sublimity as there might have been, and unquestionably there was, in the sage questions and answers from a youth of immature age, which so confounded the Jewish doctors and the whole assembly convened with them; yet none could have been more sublime, more replete with moral grandeur, than is the pious, touching reply of a beloved child to his yearning, tender-hearted mother: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

And did this virgin mother need to be reminded that this her dear offspring was, from the first moment of his birth, to be accounted, most especially, *the Son of God*, and so registered on earth, as he already was in heaven? Why then think or talk any more of his earthly parentage, or of his kindred beneath the sun? And yet it is added: "And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."

To our purpose in this discussion, nothing more is needed than the brief testimony of Jesus himself, uttered, in self-vindication, when youthful indiscretion was the most venial fault seemingly charged upon him. Let this saying simply, expand, and apply itself, as it ought to be permitted to do, and we shall scarcely need any thing more discursive or copious, as an index to the Saviour's offices and work, and to the purposes which governed, and will govern, him from the commencement to the termination of his mediatorial reign. Let us endeavor to penetrate into whatever of significance or emphasis there is in so concise an epitome of the whole kingdom of divine grace, as we have in the unpretending answer of an ingenuous, simple-hearted youth, in the person of Jesus, when gently upbraided by a fond mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

God is his Father, truly, and in some definite, intelligible sense, in a sense which admits of a distinction, that does not allow two separate conscious agents to be blended into one.—

For this, should the thing be permitted, would give rise to such confusion, as would equal the thickest and darkest cloud, that ever did or could shut out the light of heaven. "My Father's business," to signify nothing more than, or nothing different from "*My own business*," would be an interpretation of words, which children of the fewest years and of the smallest intellect would be quite competent to condemn as unpardonable nonsense.

The identity of interest between the Father and Son, asserted by Jesus, near the close of his earthly ministrations, in the following utterance, "All thine are mine and mine are thine," does not militate against the distinction above supposed. We are never at a loss how to understand it, when a subordinate agent is required by his superior to make the business his own, which has been put into his hands to be by him transacted with a full understanding, that he is not the principal, but receives in trust all that is brought under his jurisdiction. Parallel with this is the relation of the Son of God to his Father, which is brought into view, when, he appeals, from all minor considerations of duty, to the paramount object of his mission into the world, which was not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him.

When we have become resolved and settled in our convictions upon this point, in reference to the doctrine of Christ's Sonship, so as to perceive that he is less than the Father and subordinate to him, otherwise than nominally or conventionally, we may be prepared to take a further step in the discussion, and bring under consideration the *business*, which is already, as represented, under the hand of the child Jesus, though, in point of age, to be judged scarcely ripe to speak intelligently upon such a subject.

The inquiry will pertinently present itself to the mind, in search of just opinions concerning so marvellous a scene as that enacted in the temple at Jerusalem, in a conclave of doctors,

of the law, where a youth of but twelve years was the most conspicuous personage, viz: What can that business be, which the God of the universe has placed under the supervision of his Son who recognizes it as already pressing upon his hands, while yet a youth, a minor under the tutelage of his parents, and not allowed to escape from under their guardian care?

The business, signalized by such stupendous traits of character as appeared at the feast, where Jesus first awakened public admiration of his transcendent gifts, cannot be supposed so limited in its parts, and of a magnitude so inconsiderable, as to be brought into a compass, not exceeding the few days of attendance, which completed the services to be performed at the Passover. The least that can be rationally presumed to have been in the mind of Jesus, when he spake of his Father's business as engrossing his attention, is, that the part acted by him on the occasion, then transpiring, was but a link, in one vast chain of labors, of antecedents and consequents, of words and of works, extending through, and uniting in one, an entire system of co-operating counsels, to result in the redemption of man and the restoration of the world to its primitive glory and perfection. This business, taken as a whole, must have its initiation, its season of progress, its gradations, its combined influences, producing harmony, and conspiring to one and the same glorious issue.

And who is to be the master operator, the architect, under whose skill and energies this great structure is to go forward, until the whole is completed, all its various members and ramifications so adjusted as to eventuate in a production well worthy of Him, who is eminently "wise in counsel and excellent in working?" Is it not the Son of God, appointed by his Father, and by Him supplied with all requisite potency and vigor for the enterprise, who has charge of this great work, so full of grace, so magnificent in design, and so effectual to enkindle the fire of admiration and praise in all hearts?

To obtain a full and completely satisfactory answer to this interrogatory, let us not rely on what a fertile imagination may suggest, but go directly to the Holy Oracle, not to be amused with ingenious, though far-fetched, interpretations of what is written, but to be enlightened by that alone which is direct and explicit. Let us learn from confessedly well authenticated records, words of holy writ, what sphere of action has been allotted to the Son of God, by the will and appointment of the Father. And we will begin by adducing testimony from the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which is repeated what had been recorded in the more ancient scriptures, establishing His authority as reigning Prince over the vast empire of God's creation vested in the Son, and placing him at the head of all principality and power, while he is recognized as present in the beginning to lay the foundations of the earth and to give form to the heavens as his own beautiful workmanship. This is not an honor bestowed on the angels, however illustrious in their own proper sphere, but is accorded to the Son, their superior in age and dignity; "Who being the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power," and "being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they," is seated "at the right hand of the Majesty on high. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O! God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou,

Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the Heavens are the works of thy hands; They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old, as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. But to which of the angels said he at any time, sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" Here we behold the crown, placed on the head of God's dear son, glowing with gems of the purest and brightest lustre, more refulgent than ever graced the brow of royalty under any dynasty, less extended than that of universal monarch.

And how are these matchless honors to be sustained, to be preserved from tarnish, from fading away and degenerating into the emptiness of unmeaning formality and parade? Not by claiming, or affecting exemption from all manner of accountability; but by performing acts great and glorious, fit to command admiration from all beholders in heaven and on earth. "Wherefore, holy brethren, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he, who builded the house, hath more honor than the house. Moses verily was faithful in all his house, for a testimony of those things to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

It was, therefore, that he might be about his Father's business, rearing up a household, a holy temple in the Lord, that the Son was made super-angelic and super-Mosaic, and took a station far, in elevation, above celestials, "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation," and above mortals, whose work is among their brethren of a fallen race, to receive and publish what is communicated for the benefit of a world lying in wickedness.

Having now learned something from the pen of inspiration concerning the Prince of Life, his introduction into the realm, which he is to govern, whose interests, great and small, he is to manage and provide for; we have only, in prosecution of our design, to make ourselves acquainted with the credentials he brings with him, and with the chart, on which is described the plan of his administration, the intended event of its execution, and the history of its progress, from one stage of fulfilment to another.

Subsequently to the organization of our terrestrial world, as the theatre of those great displays, in which, for the present, we regard ourselves as particularly interested, we behold the progenitor and representative of our race, our common humanity, standing in the visible presence of this venerable, authoritative being, bowing to his mandates, awed by his majesty, moved by his parental kindness, and wondering at his own exquisite formation as delineated in the pattern before him. To the words of this Lawgiver and Judge he listens with reverent, adoring, and submissive ears, not as to a mere man, to a creature as stinted in capacity, and as void of right to reign as himself; but as to a man, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," and who, therefore, on this account, is able to create and to destroy. Was it improper then, that human souls and created souls of all grades, should gather around this, so dignified a personage and potentate, in prostrate homage, and tender him their services as to one supreme in glory and majesty? Was there any defect in their warrant for so doing, since " by inheritance he had obtained a more excellent name than they?" And if it pleased the Father " that in him should all fullness dwell;" what could still be lacking to entitle him to divine appellations, to be addressed as *very God?* And if Jehovah be a name appropriate to Deity, why should it be refused to him, who has become the subject of rights and authorities inherent in, and inseparable from, the infinite essence,

in which, as we suppose, Godhead consists? If we bow, in worship, before the Son of God, it is not in honor of a nature, which is distinguishable from the divine essence, but in reverence of that glory of the Father, which shines in the face of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Can it be pronounced an incongruity, then, that through the whole length of successive Providences in prescribing and sanctioning acts of worship, and training men to religious habits of obedience, there is a perpetual recurrence of incidents, in which the connexion of divine and human things is exhibited, heaven in contrast with earth, the perfections and glory of the infinite God made manifest in the closest alliance with so frail a being as man? It was not discreditable, in the estimation of Paul, that such precious treasures as gospel truth should be committed "to earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." And Jesus, though he never lost sight of his origin and parentage as the Son of God, seems never to have blushed to own himself the Son of Man.

It is in the economy of God's government, that names and things should be answerable the one to the other; so that if an angel, or messenger from heaven, appears in a divine character, pronouncing words and performing works appropriately divine, that is, decisively indicating a presence and efficiency, obviously original and independent, he should pass under the name of him, whom he represents, and be honored with the same honors that belong to the Great Proprietor and Governor of all things. Accordingly to be acceptable in the eyes of the supreme majesty of heaven, the God and Father of all, is, as enjoined in Psalm II: 11, 12, to conciliate his Son by a willing, obedient service, "Serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

This first begotten, this Son of God's love, in whom he is

ever well pleased, to whom as his Father's heir, all things belong, and " by whom the worlds were made ;" was about his Father's business, when he " laid the foundation of the earth, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." He was also about his Father's business, when he brought a flood on the world of the ungodly, but saved Noah a preacher of righteousness; and when he turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; and when he came down to see the city and tower which the children of men builded on the plains of Shinar, and scattered them thence over the face of the whole earth. He was about his Father's business, when he took to heaven Enoch and Elijah, by a more direct and pleasant passage than that through the gloomy valley of death, showing to mortals the contiguity of earth to heaven, and the efficacy of faith to bring them into the most familiar and heart-cheering alliance. He was in this same great business, when accomplishing the will of his Father, by calling Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and making him the Father of many nations, through the power of this faith, which staggers not at the promises of God through unbelief.

This ministration, on the part of the Son of God, is of primary importance in a system of grace, which aims at nothing less than to bring all men, Jews and Gentiles, into one fellowship, united by one common bond of love under him who has the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of this earth for his possession. The language of the apostle implies this, "Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy ; as it is written. For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name." While mediating a covenant of peace and love, established upon promises, which can never fail, and comprehensive of blessing of the highest value to the

whole human family, the Son was not self-instigated nor self-directed, but about his Father's business, not less when he sware to Abraham, that he should be blessed and be a blessing;—when he called to him out of heaven to restrain him from slaying his son; when he appeared to Isaac at Beersheba and said "I am the God of Abraham thy father; fear not;" and when he wrestled with Jacob and blessed him, asa prince having power with God and with men; and when he called to Moses from the midst of a burning bush and "said I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" not less in these cases, than when at Jerusalem proposing and answering questions, deeply interesting to the church of God, as depending for its prosperity on better constructions of the divine law, than it often received from its professional expounders, who held their station in the temple, not seldom teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.

Was it not as the Son of God in his Father's business, that the Angel, who redeemed Jacob out of all evil, and is declared to be the God with whom Abraham and Isaac walked, sent Moses into Egypt to redeem Israel from servitude, and afterwards, by the same prophet, gave them the lively oracles amid the thunders and terror of Mt. Sinai, and received their promise of obedience? It was no unessential part of his Father's business devolving on the Son, to provide ordinances for the church, to do the work of a school-master, in the earlier period of its existence, as children under tutors and governors need a training, which a more advanced state of maturity renders superfluous.

To illustrate the true meaning and proper use of the Levitical priesthood, and its multifarious services, the Son of God appears a Priest after the order of Melchizedeck, and asserts his influence on the sinner's heart to make it clean, instead of limiting his authority and work to the production of that holiness, which pertains to a man's exterior alone, to the things

which are but patterns or emblems of the things in the heavens. His priesthood, therefore, commends itself in its spiritual and substantial results, in purging the conscience, and not the outer man alone, in applying truth to convince of sin, and to take it away in that repentance which is unto life. Carnal ordinances are instructive teachers, pointing inward to show the necessity of right affections, and that without holiness, a pure spirit, no man can see the Lord.

Here is business for a Redeemer, in which character the Son of God, the Jehovah of the Scriptures, traverses the whole region, where the Law and the Testimony diffuse their light to reveal the way to real blessedness. The same office is ascribed to Jesus, as marking the high rank he holds in being the one sent of God to elevate the church of these latter days to a nobler height of religious attainment, than had been reached in preceding ages. Redemption is his Father's business, to which he has not been a stranger, and in which he has not been remiss since the world began, and in which he will not tire until time is no more. Assiduously engaged in this interest, he is commended to the love and confidence of men as a Shepherd, who superintends, provides for and leads the flock, for which he has the requisite sustenance and means of protection. Observe how David, in Psalm XXIII, exults in the thought, that such an one, so able and so provident, has graciously taken him into his charge, to watch over him, be his guide, shelter him from danger, give him quiet, and satisfy his desires from the most abundant sources, "Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Again he exclaims, Psalm I: 30, "Give ear, O! Shepherd of Israel, thou that

leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth." See the same personage in later times assuming and exercising the office of "Shepherd and Bishop of souls," and in this capacity doing his Father's business. John X. "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." In whose business do we say these pastoral acts are performed? "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." Thus dutifully does the Son, "whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world," identify himself with the power that had given him a mission, and furnished him with all requisites for its most perfect performance. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him."

And are there no other operations in the kingdom of God, or services rendered by the Son, while about his Father's business, described in other terms, from which we may learn something of the length and breadth of that mighty combination of influences and efforts, under which, in the hands of the Mediator, the Kingdom of God has been rising and expanding from the first ages down to the waning of time in the latter days? What shall we say of the tenure by which the Son of God holds his right to reign in his Father's name? Being in the form of God, in the exercise of prerogatives, and in the enjoyment of honors, strictly and purely divine, he was not indebted to robbery for this pre-eminence, for being equal with, or like God; but his exalted privileges and rich possessions are bought, are an acquisition made by purchase, are his in connection with devotedness to the will of the Father, and always

doing those things which please him. His exaltation, in having a name which is above every name, a name to which every knee bows and every tongue confesses that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, follows his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.

Under this aspect of the mode and progressive advancement of that gracious work, which has its completion in the spiritual renovation of the world, it is not strange, that we should find an apostle urging upon christian elders the duty of feeding the church, as having been "purchased" with blood. "Ye are not your own," says Paul, "for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's." Was not Jehovah in this same interest, employing his hands, his counsels, and his might, in transactions no wise dissimilar, when he redeemed a people for himself, gathering them into his fold as their Shepherd, to feed them with knowledge and understanding? How otherwise should we interpret the following in the Song of Moses, "which he spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel. Do ye thus requite Jehovah? O! foolish people and unwise! is he not thy father that hath *bought* thee? hath he not made thee and established thee?" But it is evidently not as supreme, otherwise than as being about his Father's business, that he thus makes himself proprietor of possessions, which are conceded to him as his.

This seems a fair inference from the language used by Abraham, when he appeals to Heaven in his disclaimer, to the king of Sodom, of his intention to share in the spoils, recovered from the enemy who had plundered Sodom of her people and of their goods. "I have lifted up my hand unto Jehovah," he says, "the most High God, the *possessor* of heaven and earth." Were he, this possessor of heaven and earth, in no sense secondary to the Supreme Divinity, like the Son of God to his Father, he could not have been addressed, as he was, in terms which imply, that he possesses heaven and earth in virtue of

the right of purchase. And yet this is the exclusive meaning of the term here adopted, if we read it in the original Hebrew. That there is no mistake in making this affirmation, will be easily ascertained by turning to Leviticus XXVII : 22, where a distinction is made between a possession obtained by purchase, and one coming in another way. "And if a man sanctify unto the Lord a field which he hath *bought*, which is not of the fields of his possession," &c. Now it will be seen by the translator of the Hebrew, that, in the mouth of Abraham, Jehovah possesses heaven and earth, as having obtained them in the way, that any property or possession is acquired, by an act of *purchase*. The word is first met with, when Eve, upon the birth of her first-born, names him Cain, and says, *I have gotten a man*. The word, rendered *gotten*, is the general term in the Hebrew Scriptures, which expresses the act of *buying*. Can it be denied this use, when referring to Jehovah as occupying a throne in the heavens, whose kingdom also ruleth over all ?

Is it not reasonable and just to admit, that, at the head of empire, and while subduing all things to himself, he is about his Father's business, since, "When it is said, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, who did put all things under him"? And if it be allowed, that "when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall also the Son himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all;" how can it appear otherwise than that the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, going forward as first, the chosen leader in the warfare against the prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that works in the children of disobedience, is indeed the Son of God, whose place has never been vacated, nor his post resigned, nor his office suspended, nor his industry relaxed, nor his influences weakened, since there has been war in Heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the Dragon and his angels ?

He was certainly about his Father's business, when, sitting in the heavens, he laughed at the impotent rage, and held in derision the vain imaginations of those who took counsel against Jehovah, and against his anointed; and when he brake them with a rod of iron, and dashed them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Not less truly was he in his Father's business, when, from being in the form of God, made higher than the Heavens, he passed downward, and took upon him the form of a servant, made in the likeness of men, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that are under the law. The glory of voluntary humiliation, the glory of dying for us when we were not friends, but enemies, this glory, with which the Son of God clothed himself when he came among us to show us of the Father, is not the least of those excellent qualities, which commend the righteousness of God, to illustrate and declare which, a sacrifice and a propitiation for our sins was needed. What business so profoundly interesting and transcendent, could call the Son of God from Heaven, to take up his abode, though but temporarily, with mortals, as reconciling all things to himself by the blood of his cross? teaching men, in the wisest and most impressive modes, to hate sin and love holiness, to receive and honor the truth in the cultivation of all disinterested virtue, and to make themselves fit for Heaven, by bringing it down to earth, in the universal propagation and establishment of true righteousness?

Such, indeed, is the business, surpassing, truly, our largest powers of conception, and our highest estimate of its magnitude and importance, put into the hands of the Son of God, to be commenced and prosecuted to its final consummation, as instituted by the Father for himself, for his own glory, dependent for its accomplishment on his own infinite energies, yet never dispensing with those mediatorial acts, through which divinity pours itself into the souls of men, and unites them to the Supreme Good. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me,

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gospel truth throughout the world, and insuring its triumph in the hearts of men, did Jesus stand, when, a mere child, he put to shame the learning of the most skilful disputants of the Jewish nation? The answer is obvious, that, not being formally installed a teacher, and being too young to excite jealousy in the guides and rulers of the church, he had a fine opportunity, being well qualified for the task, to expose and correct errors, brought in by bad teaching, and do an essential service to those religious interests, which were suffering for the want of such nurture as he alone can impart who is in the bosom of the Father, and of whom it is written, "Lo I come to do thy will, O! God." In addition to this, it may be further said of the attitude of Jesus in taking part with doctors, in their discussions, that by exhibiting so much earnestness and zeal, in doing what might be done without infringing the rights of any, and with evident benefit to all seriously inquiring for truth, he would set a worthy example of early piety, and thus recommend religion, the devout service of God, as the first and most important business of life. Is not this consideration, by itself, of sufficient weight to vindicate the unusual step ventured on by the youthful son of Joseph and Mary, and quiet all those ruffled feelings, which had been put in motion in their anxious, palpitating bosoms? Can any one deem it a fault, that he, who was to save his people from their sins, and, to this end, was to be a light to the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel, should greedily seize the first opportunity to prove his zeal to be in his work, and to show what he professed at the well of Samaria, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work?" As he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and his whole desire was to be about his Father's business, where else should we inquire for him, as a place more appropriate than the temple, when he might there be communicating knowledge, important to the saving of the soul? Is it paradoxical that a beloved and a loving son should

linger near the threshold of his father's house, that he should be happier there than in any other place, in any other home? Was not the feeling already becoming strong in the bosom of the child Jesus, which afterwards burst forth in an ardor, that armed him with a scourge to drive out profane intruders, and to overthrow the tables of money-changers, and to dislodge the traffickers in the unrighteous Mammon, with the memorable words, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandize. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up"? Could it have been foreign to his thoughts, that this place had been the chosen residence of him who is God's chosen messenger, the messenger of his covenant, from the days when the foundations of the temple were laid, and that the prophecy was hastening to its fulfilment, in which it is predicted; "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts"? Who will say, that Jesus, while his parents were wandering through the streets of Jerusalem in quest of their absent, their lost child, was not himself contemplating with delight, the speedy restoration of this house of worship, his Father's house, to its holiest use, a house of prayer for all nations, and, that here, he might soon be about his Father's business, in ministrations of a higher order, than circumstances as yet would allow?—How it was foretold that "he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness"? To anticipate somewhat in the helping forward of this work, still to take stronger hold on the hearts and minds of the people, the child Jesus tarried at Jerusalem, while his kinsfolks and friends were retracing their steps back to their own dwellings.